Ontario ⬛ **Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks**

Contact Information

For questions regarding the Species at Risk Stewardship Program, please contact us by:

Telephone: 705-313-2585

Email: **SAR.stewardship@ontario.ca**

Deadline

Applications must be submitted through the Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON) portal by 3:00pm (ET) on Tuesday, February 9, 2021. Applicants will be required to create a ONe-key account in order to access TPON. Please sign up early; it may take up to 5 business days to be granted access.

If applying as an individual, please contact SAR.stewardship@ontario.ca.

The TPON system will provide you with confirmation once your application has been submitted. Applications received after the deadline or not fully completed will not be accepted.

Note: All applicants must refer to the Legal Authorizations section of the 2021-2022 Species at Risk Stewardship Program Guidelines ("guidelines") before applying.

Objectives

As part of the government's commitment in the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan to conserve the province's rich biodiversity and promote environmental stewardship, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks ("ministry") provides annual funding through the Species at Risk Stewardship Program for species at risk protection and recovery projects that help species at risk and their habitat led by individuals, communities and groups across the province.

The objectives of the SARSP are:

- Improve the status of species at risk and their habitats by supporting stewardship and recovery actions.
- Support stewardship and multi-partner approaches to species at risk protection and recovery.
- Support outreach, youth employment opportunities and the provision of related tools and techniques to inspire and enable people to become involved in species at risk stewardship.
- Address important needs and knowledge gaps related to the protection, recovery and management of species at risk and their habitats in Ontario by supporting scientific research.

2021-2022 Species at Risk Stewardship Program

For 2021–2022, the SARSP is accepting multi-year applications (spanning 1-3 years) that support stewardship initiatives and contribute to the protection and recovery of species at risk in Ontario. All project activities must begin no earlier than April 1, 2021, and finish no later than March 1, of the final year of the project.

Background for Applicants

In Ontario, the statuses of species are assessed by a team of independent experts known as the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO) and, when assessed as at-risk, are placed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List.

The Species at Risk in Ontario List is a regulation (O. Reg. 230/08) made under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA). O. Reg. 230/08 (including species lists and status) is available on the Province of Ontario's E-laws website and on ontario.ca.

Once a species is listed as endangered, threatened or special concern on the Species at Risk in Ontario List, the ministry seeks science advice on the steps that should be taken towards the species' recovery. The advice is presented in **recovery strategies** for endangered and threatened species and **management plans** for special concern species.

The ministry responds to the advice in recovery strategies and management plans by developing a species-specific policy known as a **government response statement (GRS)**. These statements identify the provincial recovery goal and summarize the actions the government intends to take or support to help protect and recover each species.

Generally, no later then five years after the GRS is published, the ministry will publish a **review of progress** that summarizes the progress made towards the protection and recovery of a species.

All SARSP project applications must demonstrate how they consider the most current and relevant provincial recovery documents. If a species has an Ontario government response statement, applications need to address the actions identified in the GRS (not the recovery strategy or management plan). Also, if a review of progress exists for the target species, applicants may find additional information and advice on what actions have already been accomplished or what actions could use more attention. It is important that applicants review and reference the most current provincial documents.

Species Recovery Documents

To access the following **provincial** recovery documents, please refer to the [Species at Risk in Ontario List](#) and select the appropriate species:

- COSSARO assessment report
- Recovery strategy
- Management plan
- Government response statement
- Review of progress

2021-2022 Priorities

Although all project applications that target species listed as extirpated, endangered, threatened, or special concern on the Species at Risk in Ontario List are eligible for consideration, targeted SARSP priorities have been established for the 2021-2022 funding year.

Please review the following priorities in detail. We expect the 2021-2022 SARSP to be a particularly competitive year. Applications that fail to address any of the 2021-2022 priorities will be considered for funding after applications that address priorities.

1. Species Specific Priorities

Projects that address **high priority** actions as outlined in the relevant draft or final GRS for the species listed below:

- Blue Ash
- Branched Bartonia
- Butler's Gartersnake
- Jefferson Salamander and Unisexual Ambystoma (Jefferson Salamander dependent population)
- Lake Huron Grasshopper
- Massasauga (Carolinian population)
- Northern Bobwhite (under the focus area of Survey and Monitoring)
- Piping Plover (under the focus area of Management and Awareness)
- Purple Twayblade
- River Darter (Great Lakes-Upper St. Lawrence populations)
- Spiny Softshell

2. Filling Knowledge Gaps

- Development and/or implementation of standardized survey protocols and monitoring programs for species at risk bumble bees, lady beetles, riverine dragonflies and snails. The species' GRSs should be consulted to ensure alignment with supported actions. Where appropriate and feasible, development of multiple and/or combined protocols and programs should be completed.

3. Stewardship Projects that Address the Threats and Needs for Species at Risk outlined below

a. Development, distribution and promotion of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the planning and implementation of prescribed burns to assist species recovery and minimize adverse effects for species at risk. Priority should be given to species that have an action identifying prescribed burns in a GRS.

b. Determine density thresholds for roads and other linear features and/or research the effectiveness of techniques and develop recommendations for the decommissioning and restoration of roads and other linear features in Ontario's Caribou (Boreal population) Ranges to support the species' persistence.

c. Appropriate removal and/or control of invasive species for species at risk recovery if this has been identified in a GRS and there is evidence that invasive species are a direct and significant threat to the species at risk at the immediate site.

d. Mitigate threats of pathogen spillover or use of pesticides (for example, neonicotinoids) to species at risk bumble bees, by implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of BMPs in areas surrounding the species.

e For Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis and Tri-colored Bat:

- Conduct research to increase knowledge of the species' habitat (for example, overwintering habitat characteristics, summer roosting/foraging habitat characteristics, migratory routes and important stopover locations and range, spatial distribution of habitat types).

- Working collectively with industry (for example, mining, aggregates, forestry, problem/nuisance wildlife removal, agriculture, wind power) develop, implement, evaluate and promote BMPs to minimize the impacts of industry activities and operations on the species and their habitat.

4. Ecosystem Priorities

- Targeted habitat stewardship and threat reduction in savannah, alvar, dune and Great Lakes coastal wetland ecosystems that support endangered and threatened species.

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

Successful applicants must be legal entities. For example, applicants may be:
- Academic institutions
- Businesses
- Conservation Authorities
- Indigenous communities/organizations
- Individuals
- Municipal and local governments
- Non-government organizations

Non-Eligible Applicants

- Provincial government ministries and agencies
- Federal government departments and agencies

Eligible Activities

To be eligible for the SARSP, project applications must target species on the Species at Risk in Ontario List listed as:

- extirpated
- endangered
- threatened
- special concern

All project activities must be of benefit to an Ontario species at risk and should fit into at least one of the categories listed below. Examples of eligible activities are included for each category.

Habitat Management/Restoration

- Shoreline restoration, or wetland creation
- Prescribed burns to manage tall grass prairie for species at risk (SAR
- Reconnecting core SAR habitat by planting habitat corridors
- Creation/installation of SAR habitat features such as hibernacula or nesting sites

Survey, Inventory or Monitoring

- Conducting species and/or habitat monitoring
- Conducting species' inventories (for example, presence/absence/abundance surveys) for newly-listed SAR or within areas that have not been previously inventoried
- Assessing the effectiveness of stewardship activities through monitoring

Outreach and Education

- Outreach activities that increase awareness and knowledge about SAR, and encourage stewardship actions to targeted audiences or areas
- Developing public and/or industry engagement plans that promote the best actions to benefit SAR
- Promoting BMPs that minimize impacts on SAR and their habitats during land or resource use
- Delivery of information sessions for targeted audiences (for example, landowners, farmers, industries, Indigenous communities, youth) to increase awareness and knowledge of SAR and stewardship
- Preparation of brochures, fact sheets and publications, and other communications media

Direct Threat Mitigation

- Development and/or implementation of BMPs to minimize impacts on SAR and their habitats during land or resource use
- Implementation of features that reduce, mitigate or eliminate threats to SAR such as exclusion fencing or eco-passages

Research

- Filling biological knowledge gaps to inform species' recovery
- Assessing the effectiveness of stewardship activities using scientific rigour

Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- Gathering, sharing, or incorporating local and traditional ecological knowledge of SAR and their habitats

Other

- Development of local or regional plans to conduct stewardship actions to protect and recover SAR and their habitats
- Development of site-specific habitat management plans for targeted SAR

Note: All project applications will require an evaluation component to measure project success and effectiveness. Please refer to the SARSP Application 2021-2022 for more details. Where appropriate, outreach and awareness project applications must have a targeted plan and a specific evaluation component to measure changes to levels of awareness, values, behaviours and/or actions. Project applications must avoid duplication of existing products (for example, existing best management practices document or survey protocol).

Additional Considerations

- Applicants should consult species experts and partners for advice in developing project applications.

- If proposing to work in a provincial park or conservation reserve, please contact Ontario Parks at PASCIENCE@ontario.ca.

- Projects or studies that are required by law are not eligible, including activities that are being undertaken to fulfill legal requirements or conditions identified in an ESA authorization or regulation.

- Projects focusing on multi-species, ecosystems or single-species will all be considered for funding.

- While provincial and federal governments may, in certain circumstances be able to support projects through in-kind and financial contributions, they are not able to receive any direct funding from an approved SARSP project.

- Applicants are responsible for obtaining landowner permission to access private property to undertake proposed activities.

- In the context of most projects, successful applicants are strongly encouraged to submit species observation records and habitat information to the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC).

- The Government of Ontario is not bound to act based on any findings that are produced during a project. Any mapping products that result from a project are for the voluntary use of stewardship organizations only. The methods and results of a project will not necessarily be endorsed by the ministry nor the Government of Ontario for use in future SAR habitat identification or land use decisions.

Eligible Costs

The following expense categories are eligible for funding. Please refer to the 2021–2022 SARSP application form and accompanying budget table spreadsheet for further details of each expense category.

- **Staff:** includes wages and mandatory benefits for staff that will be directly involved in the implementation of the project. Project management costs, such as oversight, planning, and accounting are excluded from eligible staff costs, but may be included under Support Services or Indirect Costs of Research (see below). If you are a consultant or consulting company applying for Species at Risk Stewardship Program (SARSP) funding it is important that you itemize your project costs by the budget categories provided. Rates that include costs other than wages (for example, oversight, travel) must be broken-out and included in the relevant categories listed below rather than captured under staff.

- **Goods:** includes materials and supplies required for the project.

- **Services:** includes third party costs such as a contractor to excavate a wetland or a design company to develop communication materials. Costs for some types of services may include reasonable disbursements in addition to fees if commonly charged for such types.

- **Consultants:** includes third party advice or expertise. Consultant costs may include reasonable disbursements in addition to fees if commonly charged for such consulting services. However, funds may not be used for costs that would otherwise be ineligible or beyond reasonable limits set by the program (for example, travel and hospitality limits). If you are a consultant or consulting company applying for SARSP funding, you must itemize your project costs by the budget categories provided. This category is only for third party advice or expertise.

- **Transportation:** may include transportation for meetings or events for project staff, contractors or meeting/ event attendees. Funded amounts must align with the Ontario Government's Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive. Transportation costs will be by the most practical and economical method.

- **Accommodation**: may include appropriate/economical accommodations for meetings or events for project staff, contractors or meeting/event attendees.

- **Food and beverage:** may include costs for food or beverages during project meetings/events held with the public. Costs must be calculated according to the rates in the [Ontario Government's Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive](). Collecting and retaining itemized receipts to verify the expenditure will be required. Funds requested under this budget category may not be used for: non-meal food and beverages; alcohol; meals when the travel period is less than 5 hours, or meals during travel when travel is a part of the regular job duties of the staff or contractor.

- **Hospitality-public meetings/events**: may include costs for food or beverages during project meetings/ events held with the public. Costs must be calculated according to the rates in the [Ontario Government's Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive](). If funds are being requested to pay for non-meal food and beverages (for example, coffee, water, snacks) during public project meetings or events the amount cannot exceed $5 per day per person for a half-day public meeting/event or $10 per day per person for a full day public meeting/event. Collecting and retaining itemized receipts to verify the expenditures will be required. Funds cannot be requested for alcohol.

- **Equipment/capital item rental:** the province may approve the purchase instead of the rental of equipment or capital items if: (i) the equipment or capital item is being used on multiple occasions throughout the project; (ii) total rental costs are greater than the one-time purchase cost; and (iii) without the project, it is unlikely that the recipient would purchase the equipment or capital item.

- **Administration expenses:** administration expenses are comprised of disbursements such as postage/ courier charges, photocopying charges, office supplies, and financial institution service fees incurred in carrying out the project. Funds may not be used for avoidable financial institution service fees (for example, NSF charges). For clarity, administration expenses do not include items such as salary and wages, rent, travel, accommodation and meal expenses, computers, legal fees, audit fees, engineering fees, and other professional fees.

- **Support services**: includes the time spent by staff in human resources, finance, information technology, and communications departments providing administrative support that can be reasonably attributable to the project. Project managers that have a key role in project implementation are not included and key project participants are not included under support services. However, managers/positions that are solely involved in the oversight and planning of the project (such as principals, executive directors, academic supervisors) should be included under support services.

- **Indirect costs of research:** includes costs that are part of the normal operations of an applicant's organization, but which can be reasonably attributable to the project. These costs may include maintenance and repair of equipment used for the project, building operating costs caused by the project (for example, lights on after hours), materials used in operating research equipment, library holdings acquired for use in the project; salaries of employees providing administrative support for time spent supporting the project (for example, research departments, financial, human resources, administrative services, regulatory bodies, purchasing offices).

Requested funds for administration expenses, support services and indirect costs of research combined cannot exceed 10% of total funds requested from the SARSP.

Note: Funding from the ministry may be applied to the non-refundable portion of HST only. The ministry will not reimburse for HST beyond the approved project amount.

Assessment Criteria

- General
  - Applications must be completed in full and align with the 2021–2022 SARSP Guidelines to be considered.
  - Applicants should not assume that reviewers are familiar with their past work. Applicants must ensure that they outline how proposed activities build on past work (if applicable). Projects can only be evaluated on what is included in the application.

- Value of the project to species protection and recovery
  - Proposed activities address identified protection or recovery actions as outlined in government response statements (GRS). If a species does not yet have a GRS, proposed activities need to address actions identified in relevant recovery strategies or management plans.

- Activities will directly benefit targeted species at risk, their habitat and/or the targeted ecosystem.
- Activities are relevant, fill a demonstrated need, and/or address an impending threat.
- Project is part of, links to, and/or complements a larger species recovery or habitat protection initiative.
- Project design and partnerships
  - Project is feasible and work plan is detailed.
  - Objectives, design and methods are practical, appropriate and scientifically sound.
  - Numerous partners are engaged in and support the project (partnerships/collaboration are used to maximize available resources and knowledge).
  - Project budget is detailed and appropriate for scope of work.
  - Multi-year requests show a demonstrated need, subsequent years build on previous years.
  - Amount of matching funds/support from other sources has been identified.
- Additional project considerations
  - Performance measures and evaluations are built into the project to assess the effectiveness of the activities.
  - Applicant has proven experience, expertise and capacity to complete the project.
  - Efficiencies realized through use of existing materials and established BMPs, or an innovative or creative approach.
  - Project will contribute to broader biodiversity health and/or landscape-level stewardship.
  - Likelihood for long-term benefits and continued work through established partnerships.
  - Application is easy to understand and follows all outlined criteria.
  - Alignment of the proposed activities with the annual SARSP priorities.

Other Contributions or Funding

Project applications that include other contributions (in-kind and financial) from a variety of sources are encouraged. Other funds can either be matching dollars, in-kind donations, or a combination. The amount of other funds is a criterion that will be evaluated when applications are reviewed, whereby project applications with other (and matching) dollars will be evaluated more favourably than those with in-kind donations. If applicants indicate in-kind contributions, they are required to describe how they are valued. Land values cannot be used as in-kind matching funds.

Multi-Year Projects

For the 2021-2022 funding year, the SARSP may consider multi-year projects for up to three years of funding. Multi-year requests are evaluated on demonstrated need and how subsequent years build on the previous year.

Payments are subject to the terms and conditions of the agreements and will require interim and final reporting, which are satisfactory to the ministry, for payment.

Notification

All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application. Applicants cannot proceed with a project on the expectation that it will be funded under the SARSP without an executed agreement by the ministry. Following project approval, all applicants are required to enter into a transfer payment agreement with the Province to be eligible to receive funds.

Agreement and Payment

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a transfer payment agreement which includes the terms and conditions of acceptance, expenditure and reporting requirements.

The terms and conditions of the funding will be set out in detail in the transfer payment agreement. Generally, those terms and conditions will be consistent with the following:

- Payments will be made following the completion of milestones, and ministry approval of required project reporting. An initial payment may be available upon signing of the transfer payment agreement.

- For single-year projects, the final date to submit all final reporting and financial documentation is **March 1, 2022**. For multi-year projects not in their final year, an interim report with financial documentation is due March 1 of each year of the project.

- Applicants approved for funding will be required to submit certificates of insurance to confirm insurance coverage in accordance with the terms of the transfer payment agreement.

If you would like to see an example of the detailed transfer payment agreement before applying, please contact us at SAR.Stewardship@Ontario.ca.

Legal Authorizations

All applicants must review this section before applying.

Authorizations & Other Requirements

Applicants are responsible for identifying and obtaining any authorizations required for the project. Projects cannot proceed until the required authorizations are obtained.

The following are authorizations and other requirements that may be required for projects being funded. There may be additional authorizations needed depending on your project. These guidelines are designed to help develop your application as completely as possible. Note that authorizations (for example, permits) do not have to be in place in order to submit your application. However, having an authorization, if required, will enable your project to start on time.

Disclaimer: Applicants must note that the following is for illustrative purposes only and does not constitute advice of any kind from the Ministry on how an applicant must comply with any requirements of law. Applicants must not rely on the following information as being a comprehensive list of authorizations or other requirements that may be required for their particular project and should consult with their own legal counsel or other relevant advisors in this regard.

Applicants should also note that the ministry will not give preferential treatment for any authorization issued by the ministry. The ministry is under no obligation to issue authorizations and retains authority to refuse issuing authorizations if it is reasonable to do so, based on the information provided.

If your project involves a species listed as extirpated, endangered or threatened under the ESA, you may wish to contact the Species at Risk Branch of the Ministry at SARontario@ontario.ca for information on whether an authorization under the ESA is required. Early contact with the Species at Risk Branch during your project planning process may enable you to amend your project plan to avoid adverse impacts to species at risk and their habitats and allow you to determine the need for an authorization under the ESA. The Species at Risk branch may be able to provide information on the following:

i. Whether your project activities may be eligible for a conditional exemption under Ontario Regulation 242/08;

ii. Whether an ESA 17(2)(b) ("B") permit may be required and will need to be obtained before undertaking the funded activity; or,

iii. Whether your proposed activity may not require an authorization under the ESA.

All funded projects must avoid and/or minimize adverse effects to species at risk and their habitat. An ESA authorization is not required for activities that do not kill, harm or harass a species at risk, damage or destroy their habitat or otherwise contravene section 9 (species protection) or section 10 (habitat protection) of the Act. For greater detail, please refer to section 9 and section 10 of the ESA.

Most activities supported by the SARSP are eligible for the conditional exemption set out in section 23.17(10) of Ontario Regulation 242/08 (General) made under the ESA and therefore would not require a B permit. For information on eligibility for conditional exemptions and the regulatory requirements please consult O. Reg. 242/08 (General) made under the ESA.

Projects that involve activities not covered under this regulation and that impact species at risk would require a B permit and you must contact SARontario@ontario.ca.

If your project will be occurring in a provincial park or conservation reserve, you may require additional authorization. You can apply for a research authorization online at Ontario Parks research or if you have any questions about working in provincial parks and conservation reserves please email PAScience@ontario.ca.

Before carrying out an activity that requires the handling of an amphibian, bird, reptile or mammal you must develop procedures relating to the proper handling and care of the species that you will follow and have the procedures approved by an animal care committee established under subsection 17(1) of the *Animals for Research Act*.

Also, please refer to the protocols for the detection and handling of fish and mussels that include animal care considerations have been published by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada: detection of fish protocol and the detection and relocation of freshwater mussel protocol.

Recognition

If instructed by the ministry, the successful applicant may be required to acknowledge the receipt of financial assistance from the Government of Ontario.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Personal information provided on the 2021–2022 SARSP application form is being collected by the ministry to be used for the purposes of the proper administration of the SARSP, including to contact you for clarification or further information about your project proposal.

The collection, use and disclosure of this information are governed by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Questions about this collection, use or disclosure of personal information should be directed to the Species at Risk Stewardship Program team at SAR.stewardship@ontario.ca.

Auditing

To ensure integrity in the use of public funds, the Province of Ontario reserves the right to require independent verification of reported information as required in the terms of the transfer payment agreement. The terms as set out in a transfer payment agreement must be satisfied to receive payments. The successful applicant shall provide, if requested by the Province, any necessary permissions to access the property where the project activities took place and make available any records, documents and/or information that may be required for this purpose.

Terms of Reference

- This call for applications is not intended to be a formal legally-binding procurement process.
- The ministry reserves the right to seek clarification and supplementary information from any applicant.
- The ministry may elect not to consider an application containing misrepresentations or any inaccurate, misleading or incomplete information.
- Once a project application has been submitted, it cannot be substantially modified or changed.

For general information on SAR and the ESA please refer to the program website.