



SARA: The Species at Risk Act and Aboriginal Involvement

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Stewardship Activities: Taking Action to Protect and Recover Species at Risk

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The Species at Risk Act (SARA) is a new federal law that came into full effect in June 2004. The purpose of SARA is to prevent wildlife species (plants and animals) from becoming extinct, to help in their recovery, and to protect their critical habitat. This purpose is closely aligned with the goal of many Aboriginal groups - to ensure that plant and animal species are around for future generations.

Stewardship, or active involvement in protection and recovery, of species at risk is a way for Aboriginal groups to work towards this important goal of caring for plants and animals and the places that they live. When Aboriginal people participate in stewardship activities they increase knowledge about species at risk in their communities, empower community members to take action and protect species, contribute towards the conservation goals of the community, and the goals described in government strategies or plans for recovering species at risk.

The following are some examples of how Aboriginal people are taking action and becoming involved in

stewardship activities to protect and recover species at risk on their lands and waters.

Piapot First Nation, Saskatchewan – Mapping for Species at Risk (2005-present)

[Funded by the Aboriginal Critical Habitat Protection Fund with assistance from the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER)]

Piapot First Nation, located in the Qu'Appelle valley north of Regina, has several SAR on their territory. Piapot undertook a mapping project to identify species at risk and their habitat on their First Nation's lands and waters. This project engaged community members to take an active role in planning for species at risk recovery and future land use. With assistance from CIER and a Piapot First Nation community planner, hunters and trappers, fishers, Elders, youth and women participated in mapping sessions. The goal was to work towards protecting and recovering species at risk on their lands and water.

Piapot and CIER are now working together to understand the recovery plans developed for specific species and their habitat identified on Piapot lands and

waters during the community mapping sessions. Using information gained during the mapping project, Piapot First Nation is looking forward to developing action plans that:

- a) Identify specific actions (e.g. planting native species to restore habitat) that Piapot can undertake to protect and recover the species at risk found on their lands and waters; and,
- b) Identify areas of Piapot reserve and TLE lands that should be considered for protection when Piapot is planning their future development projects.

Prince Albert Model Forest, Saskatchewan – Woodland Caribou Distribution: Aboriginal Stewardship Project (2006-2007)

[Funded by the Habitat Stewardship Program]

The Prince Albert Model Forest, with participation by Aboriginal community members in the Lac La Ronge region, are undertaking a project to document local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge on the current and historical distribution of woodland caribou in central Saskatchewan. This information will assist in understanding the decline in the population of this species, which is listed as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and under SARA. Elders and other community members from the Lac La Ronge region are sharing their knowledge of woodland caribou and contributing to our understanding of current distribution, essential habitat, quality of the habitat, changes in predator/prey balance, and changes in human land use practices. By participating in this project, community members are taking action to be involved in woodland caribou recovery by creating awareness of species at risk in their own communities and sharing knowledge that will help plan for conservation of the species.

From: Environment Canada. Canadian Wildlife Service National Site. Habitat Stewardship Program – Prairie and Northern Region 2006-2007 (<http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/hsp-pih>). Last updated: 2007-01-04.



How can you and your community get involved?

Stewardship activities do take time and money, but if there is a community desire to take action, funding is available to undertake species at risk recovery projects. Possible sources of funding are government funds including:

a) **Aboriginal Critical Habitat Fund (ACHF)** (Contact Regional Coordinator at (780) 951-8700), and the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP)

www.recovery.gc.ca/hsp-pih/ (Contact the Manitoba office at pat.rakowski@ec.gc.ca or Saskatchewan at diana.ghikas@ec.gc.ca), both focusing on species at risk habitat protection (Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada);

b) **EcoAction Community Funding Program** www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction/ focusing on community activities (Environment Canada) (Contact EcoAction Office for Prairie and Northern Region at ecoaction@ec.gc.ca;

c) Endangered Species Recovery Fund (ESRF)

www.recovery.gc.ca/ESRF/index.cfm focusing on species at risk research and education (Environment Canada and the World Wildlife Fund) (Contact World Wildlife Fund at (416) 489-4567;

d) The Interdepartmental Recovery Fund (IRF)

focusing on recovery activities in species at risk recovery strategies and action plans (Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada) (www.irf-fir.gc.ca/default_e.cfm).

Note: Only federal organizations including government departments and crown corporations can apply for IRF funds. However, this can be done in partnership with Aboriginal organizations and Tribal Councils.

Other organisations working on species at risk projects that are able to offer information and support include: federal organisations such as the Canadian Wildlife Federation www.cwf-fcf.org, Nature Conservancy of Canada www.natureconservancy.ca, Nature Canada www.cnf.ca, and World Wildlife Fund, www.wwf.ca, as well as provincial organisations such as the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, www.mhhc.mb.ca, Nature Saskatchewan, www.naturesask.ca, and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, www.swa.ca.

Next Steps

The first step to stewardship activities for species at risk include learning more about SARA and its processes, identifying which SARA species are found in and around your community, and identifying potential actions for recovering and protecting species at risk in your area.

If you would like to find out more about SARA, potential benefits and adverse impacts on Aboriginal peoples and their rights, and how to get involved in the process through consultation and stewardship activities, read related newsletters from this six-part series.

You can access information in the '**Species at Risk Information Package**' on the **CIER website** (www.cier.ca),

and on the following government of Canada websites:

- (1) www.sararegistry.gc.ca (provides information on the SARA and related legal documents, including the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, permit applications, recovery strategies, action plans, regulations, orders and notices for public consultations);
- (2) www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca (provides information on the biology of species at risk in Canada, their distribution, habitat requirements and threats);
- (3) www.aquaticspeciesatrisk.gc.ca (provides information on aquatic species at risk in Canada, including fish, reptiles, marine mammals and molluscs); and
- (4) www.pc.gc.ca/nature/eep-sar/index_e.asp (provides information on Parks Canada's role in the recovery of species at risk.

Additional information can be obtained from:

Environment Canada Inquiry Centre
351 St. Joseph Boulevard
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H3
Tel: (819) 997-2800
Tel: (800) 668-6767
E-mail: enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca

Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Communications Branch
200 Kent Street
13th Floor, Station 13228
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Parks Canada
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