



SPECIES AT RISK ACTION FUND (SARAF)

Guidelines for Applicants

Please read these guidelines carefully.
Incomplete applications will not be processed.

Applications must be received electronically by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, September 30, 2025.

The ***Species at Risk Action Fund (SARAF)*** aims to improve the status of Species at Risk (SAR) and their habitats by supporting species inventories and management planning on ecologically sensitive lands by eligible recipients.

OLTA currently holds funding from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP) Species at Risk Stewardship Program (SARSP). Through this grant, we are able to support small grants to member land trusts in their work to protect and recover SAR on their properties.

The SARAF fund will support SAR inventory projects, property management plan (PMP) costs and/or direct habitat management actions. Eligible projects will be those **undertaken since April 1, 2025 or that will be completed by January 16, 2026.**

Funding has been made available through support provided by the Government of Ontario.

PLEASE READ THESE GUIDELINES AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS CAREFULLY.

Incomplete applications will not be processed.

Please direct any inquiries to mikayla.johnston-clayton@olta.ca

1. Submission

BEFORE completing the SARAF application, please thoroughly review:

- 1) The SARAF Guidelines for Applicants

Completed applications and all documentation are to be submitted **by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, September 30, 2025**. Completed applications and all documentation are to be submitted electronically via [Foundant Technologies grant application portal](#).

Applicants will need to create a user account. The link contains instructions and tutorials on how to create an account and access the Apply dashboard.

Please contact the OLTA office if you have any problems or questions.

Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered. Applicants will receive an automatic email from Foundant at the time of submission. Applicants are responsible for contacting OLTA shortly thereafter if they do not receive a confirmation e-mail.

2. Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible for SARAF funding, an applicant must be a Member of Ontario Land Trust Alliance in good standing with OLTA and in adherence or working towards adherence with the *Canadian Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices, 2019*. OLTA Associates are not eligible for SARAF funding.

3. Project Eligibility & Evaluation Criteria

SARAF will support the eligible costs of conducting Species at Risk (SAR) inventories, direct habitat management actions and/or the costs of developing property management plans (PMPs) on properties that contain or have a high probability of supporting Species at Risk.

A minimum match of 0.5 non-provincial investment for every dollar of provincial funds is required. Projects that provide a higher match ratio will be scored higher in that area. Matching funds may include both cash and in-kind contributions. See Eligible Expenses for details on what expenses can be considered for match.

Project proposals must target species listed as endangered, threatened, or special concern on the Species at Risk in Ontario List. The regulation (including species lists and status) is available on the Province of Ontario's [E-laws website](#) and on the [MECP website](#). Proposed activities should link to actions and approaches outlined in existing Government Response Statements, Recovery Strategies and/or Management Plans.

Properties will be evaluated against the following criteria and must meet at least one of the following criteria to be eligible:

Property is located within a priority landscape/ecosystem of the SARAF Guidelines (Appendix 1)
Priority species from the SARAF Guidelines have been confirmed <u>on</u> the property (Appendix 1)
Priority species from the SARAF Guidelines <u>are highly likely to occur on</u> the property (Appendix 1)
Priority species from the SARAF Guidelines will be targeted for activities <u>on</u> the property (Appendix 1)
One or more, <u>other</u> provincially listed species at risk has been confirmed <u>on</u> the property (see the MECP Endangered Species Act Schedule 2, 3 or 4)
Property has other confirmed Schedule 1 SARA-listed species confirmed on the property (see Species at Risk Act)
Property has a high probability of supporting at least one provincially or federally listed SAR.

Additional evaluation criteria are provided in Appendix 2 for direct management action projects. Please review carefully.

The SARAF Grant Review Committee will review and assess all applications. The Committee reserves the right to request clarification and/or additional information from an applicant to aid in consideration of the request.

Please remember that SARAF is a competitive funding program, and that meeting project eligibility does not guarantee that your request will be successful and/or that full funding will be granted.

4. Eligible Cost Details

SARAF will support the costs associated with undertaking SAR Inventories for existing *fee-simple properties, Conservation Easement Agreements, or properties that are under review by the land trust for acquisition*, and costs associated with developing PMPs for existing *fee-simple properties*. The following costs are eligible:

- Costs to develop a PMP that outlines management actions to protect SAR and other significant conservation values of the property (includes staff time/and or consultant time at a rate of up to \$350 per day).
- Costs to undertake a SAR Inventory to determine presence of SAR (includes staff time and/or consultant time at a rate of up to \$350 per day).

SARAF will also support costs associated with the implementation of **direct habitat management actions**, as identified in government recovery documents and/or Property Management Plans, to improve SAR habitat or to mitigate threats. Actions may include, but are not limited to, habitat enhancements or creation, vegetation plantings, removal of exotics, erection of fencing, relocation of trails, signage etc. **These actions may take place on owned properties or CEA with the written agreement of the landowner.** Eligible expenses include:

- ¹Equipment (match only)
- Fencing
- Supplies
- Vehicle Rental
- Travel (includes mileage at applicant's approved rate not to exceed current [Treasury Board Secretariat](#) rates)
- Signage
- Direct staff and/or contractor costs for direct project implementation (maximum rate of \$350/day)

¹ Property having physical substance or computer software that: a. is used by the recipient to produce or provide goods or services; and b. has a lifespan longer than one year; but does not include items with a value less than \$500 (before tax)

Ineligible Costs include:

- Salaries and benefits other than those noted above
- Organizational administration/overhead
- All land acquisition and/or easement purchase costs
- General land management/stewardship costs
- Annual/routine monitoring costs
- Stewardship endowment funds

If goods or services are acquired for your project, you will be expected to describe the procurement process to acquire goods and services and justify the selection of the preferred proponent which evidences value for money as part of the final reporting for the project.

5. Auditing

OLTA reserves the right, on behalf of the OLTA-MECP partnership, to complete an audit of the financial records of SARAF grant recipients to ensure compliance with the terms and obligations of the grant recipient agreement. When requested, the recipient shall provide and make available to such auditors any records, documents, and information that the auditors may require. The scope, coverage and timing of such audits shall be as determined by OLTA. OLTA will inform the recipient of the results of any audit and the recipient will address, or put into place measures to address, as soon as possible after the completion of the audit, any activities which the audit may show to be necessary to be in compliance with the intention of SARAF.

6. Required Documentation

For completed projects (April 1, 2025 – September 30, 2025):

- The completed application, including the property assessment roll number.
- Required signatures acknowledging information/data disclosures including written confirmation in Section I of the SARAF Application that the current title holder (either private landowner in the case of conservation agreements or the agency holding title for fee-simple acquisitions) understands that data contained in the application and resultant products (i.e., PMP, direct habitat management actions and/or SAR Inventory) will be submitted to SARAF in a funding request and may be shared with government partners.
- Copy of transfer/deed of land (for owned or CEA properties)
- Copy of title abstract; including copy of registered and signed Conservation Easement Agreement if applicable (for owned or CEA properties)
- Copy of Baseline Documentation Report for projects on Conservation Easement Agreement properties.
- Regional Locator Map with local context (for example, adjacent conservation lands, natural heritage designations).
- Property Boundary Map which includes a legend and clearly shows the property boundary. *Maps must be legible, to scale, and include a legend. Maps not meeting these requirements will cause an application to be considered incomplete and could affect funding decisions.*
- A copy of PMP, SAR Inventory and/or direct habitat management actions including the information listed in Appendix 3.

For projects to be completed by January 16, 2026:

- The completed application, including the property assessment roll number.
- Required signatures acknowledging information/data disclosures including written confirmation in Section I of the SARAF Application that the current title holder (either private landowner in the case of conservation agreements or the agency holding title for fee-simple acquisitions) understands that data contained in the application and resultant products (i.e., PMP and/or SAR Inventory) will be submitted to SARAF in a funding request and may be shared with government partners.
- Copy of transfer/deed of land (for owned or CEA properties)
- Copy of title abstract; including copy of registered and signed Conservation Easement Agreement if applicable (for owned or CEA properties);
- Copy of Baseline Documentation Report for projects on Conservation Easement Agreement properties.
- Regional Locator Map with local context (for example, adjacent conservation lands, natural heritage designations).
- Property Boundary Map which includes a legend and clearly shows the property boundary. *Maps must be legible, to scale, and include a legend. Maps not meeting these requirements will cause an application to be considered incomplete and could affect funding decisions.*
- A project plan showing expected timelines and completion date.

Please note: You will be required to submit a satisfactory PMP/SAR Inventory report and/or direct management action report by January 23, 2026, in order to receive the final installment of your approved grant.

7. Notification

OLTA will make every effort to notify applicants in writing about the results of the application process within 30 days of the submission deadline.

8. Grant Agreement and Payment

Successful applicants will be required to sign a Grant Agreement with OLTA, outlining the terms and conditions of the grant acceptance, approved expenditures and related information, before any funds are released.

Where funding is approved for costs already incurred, OLTA will reimburse costs generally within 30 days of notification of approval provided all conditions are met.

9. Recognition and Communications

The successful recipient will give credit to and acknowledge receipt of financial assistance from the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, through SARAF, in every report, advertisement, brochure, media release, signage, etc. related to the project, as follows:

“The Species at Risk Action Fund assists eligible recipients with costs associated with planning and management to help conserve Ontario’s biodiversity. Assistance for this project was provided by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and the Government of Ontario.”

The Partner will include the OLTA logo, to be supplied by OLTA, and the Government of Ontario logo (upon approval from the Province) and follow design and usage rules for these logos, in every report, advertisement, brochure, media release, signage, etc. where other logos are included.

Recipients will invite OLTA and, at OLTA's request MECP, to participate in any public announcements or ceremonies in regard to the project, and further agree to cooperate with OLTA in any communications OLTA might lead pertaining to achievements realized under SARAF.

Where feasible, OLTA also requests that grant recipients provide one high-resolution electronic photograph of your project, along with confirmation that OLTA has permission to use the image in print and/or on-line media. Please provide photo credit where required.

Appendix 1

Priority Species and Priority Areas for Species at Risk

The following priorities were established by MECP SARSP for the 2023/2024 funding year. Applications for the SARAF should focus on species inventories for PMPs or direct actions that aim to address the priorities outlined below. Applications that fail to address any of the following priorities will be considered for funding after applications that address priorities.

1. SPECIES SPECIFIC PRIORITIES

High priority actions as outlined in the relevant draft or final Government Response Statements (GRS) for the species listed below:

- American Ginseng
- Blanding's Turtle
- Bobolink
- Colicroot
- Eastern Flowering Dogwood
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Eastern Small-footed Myotis
- Eastern Whip-poor-will
- Gattinger's Agalinis
- Little Brown Myotis
- Massasauga (Great Lakes – St. Lawrence population)
- Northern Myotis
- Spiny Softshell
- Spotted Turtle
- Tri-coloured Bat

2. LANDSCAPE/ECOSYSTEM PRIORITIES

Proposed projects targeting this priority category must make direct links to and document Species at Risk present in the targeted location.

- Targeted habitat stewardship and threat reduction in dune ecosystems that support endangered and threatened species
- Targeted habitat stewardship in riparian/riverine ecosystems in southern Ontario (south of the Canadian Shield) that support a high diversity of species at risk (e.g., Ausable, Grand, Thames and Sydenham Rivers and their tributaries)
- The creation, enhancement or maintenance of grassland ecosystems that support endangered and threatened species, especially Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Applicants are responsible for obtaining landowner permission to access private property to undertake proposed activities.
- Applicants are responsible for obtaining the correct permits to undertake inventories and implement management actions for Species at Risk if required.
- In the context of some projects, successful applicants are strongly encouraged to submit species and habitat information to the Natural Heritage Information Centre.

Appendix 2

Additional Evaluation Criteria for Funding Consideration under SARAF for Management Action Projects

- Is the action(s) being implemented on a property with posted Critical Habitat for any endangered or threatened species at risk listed under the Endangered Species Act?
- Does the action(s) address broad strategies and/or approaches described in the final or proposed Recovery Strategy for the species?
- Is the action(s) identified as a high priority in the corresponding Property Management Plan or addressing a new or urgent threat that has arisen since the PMP was developed?
- Is there a high probability that the action(s) undertaken will have the intended result?
- Does the action address a single species or are there broader or multi-species benefits?
- How will the impact of the action(s) be measured over the short and long-term?
- What plans are there for future monitoring and/or surveys to assess the benefits to SAR?

Appendix 3

Required Information for Property Management Plans, SAR Inventories and Direct Management Actions

Property management plans (PMP) must follow the *Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices 2019*. The PMP must also include the following elements (please refer to the [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#) for guidance):

- Has a recent SAR inventory been conducted? Y/N
- Has a SAR recovery plan/action plan been consulted: Yes or No or N/A
- Date the plan was prepared
- Scope (includes what the plan intends to affect and the timeframe)
- Vision/Goal
- Conservation Targets (identified and assessed)
- Critical Threats (identified and assessed)
- Stewardship/Management actions with direct connections to threats and conservation targets and a timeline for completing each action

SAR inventory must include:

- Date of current inventory
- Date of previous inventory (if any)
- Summary of inventory methods
- Recommended date to re-examine
- Identification of any threats identified
- Key findings as they relate to SAR
- Is there a management plan? Yes or No or Being developed
- Volunteer involvement and staff/contractor match
- SAR inventory details (please use table below):

SAR Recording Form

SPECIES NAME	DATE (Date of observation)	OBSERVER (Name of person who observed the species.)	LOCATION (A brief location description)	OBSERVATION_DES (brief descrip. of the obs. details e.g.: "nest, three eggs", "45 flowering stems" etc.)	SEARCH_RES (Search result - +ve or-ve)	Easting	Northing	DATUM	Zone	Accuracy (from GPS)

Required Information for Management Action Report

For each action undertaken, provide the following information:

- General type of action implemented (e.g., residence creation, erection of fencing)
- Brief description of what was done (e.g., erected 5 bird boxes; put up fence to close off trail)
- Result indicators (e.g. for improvements: # hectares improved; For impact mitigation: # of SAR individuals protected, for participation: # person-days)
- Species affected (list all species addressed)

Management Action (indicate general type of action)	<u>Description</u> (include a short description of what was done)	<u>Result Indicator</u> (quantitative measure)	<u>Species Targeted</u> (list all SAR addressed by action)	<u>Staff Match Contribution</u> (# of person days)	<u>Contractor Match Contribution</u> (# of person days)
Habitat Improvement Actions:					
Vegetation planting		# of hectares improved			
Vegetation and exotic removal		# of hectares improved			
Riparian restoration		# of km improved			
Habitat creation		# of residences created			
Other habitat improvement activities (describe)		# of hectares improved (or other relevant metric)			
Human Impact/Threat Mitigation Actions:					
<i>For example:</i> Trail re-alignment	<i>Include the identified threat</i>	# of SAR animals/individuals			

Erection of fencing Signage Other mitigation action	<i>and how it was addressed and/or reduced.</i>	# of SAR sites/colonies/ populations protected # of SAR species protected overall # of signs designed and installed			
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<u>Volunteer Involvement</u>		
# of volunteers		# of hours
Youth (anyone under the age of 25)		
Adult (anyone 25 years and older)		

Appendix 4

Helpful References, Resources and Websites

SPECIES RECOVERY DOCUMENTS

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

- COSSARO Assessment Report
- Recovery Strategy
- Management Plan
- Government Response Statement

To access federal recovery documents, please refer to the following websites:

- [Federal draft or final Recovery Strategies](#)
- [Federal draft or final Management Plans](#)
- [Federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada \(COSEWIC\) Status Reports](#)

RESOURCE WEBSITES

[Important Bird Areas](#)

[COSEWIC](#)

[Federal Species at Risk](#)

[Provincial Species at Risk site](#)

[Land Registry Offices](#)

[Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint for Biodiversity](#)

[Niagara Escarpment Plan](#)

[Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan](#)

[Natural Heritage Information Centre](#)

[Provincial Planning Statement \(2024\)](#)

[Ontario Provincial Planning Act](#)

[Bruce Trail Conservancy](#) – Optimum Trail Route

[UNESCO site](#) – Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage

[RAMSAR Wetlands](#)