



Species At Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands



2023 Program Guide



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Environment and
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Species At Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands

Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) is an Environment and Climate Change Canada initiative focused on working with farmers to support the recovery of species at risk on agricultural landscapes. SARPAL funds on-the-ground conservation actions that support various species at risk (SAR), but specifically targets the following SAR: Loggerhead Shrike, Henslow's Sparrow, Barn Swallow, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, American Badger, Little Brown Bat, Eastern Foxsnake, Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bee, Rusty-patched Bumble Bee and Monarch.

Ontario has 12 million acres of farmland, often integrated with valuable plant, fish and wildlife habitat. Farmers, predominantly those with livestock, manage significant amounts of Ontario's grassland habitats. Voluntary stewardship actions by farmers are critical to the conservation of species at risk in Ontario, especially for species that rely on grassland habitat. SARPAL provides funding to support the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that play a key role in protecting, maintaining and enhancing healthy SAR habitat while sustaining production and profitability on the farm.

For more information about the SAR that might be on your farm, download our Farm Field Guides (Grasslands and Wetlands available) at www.ontariosoilcrop.org/oscia-programs/sarpal/additional-resources/ or call 519-826-4214 to request paper copies.

American Badger
Endangered



While American badger habitat is common on farmland, it doesn't include crop fields. Badger habitat can be found in field and forest edges, old fencerows, hedgerows, windbreaks, buffer strips and abandoned fields. American badgers are well equipped for digging burrows with long (3.8 cm) claws on their powerful front legs and a streamlined head. American badgers are nocturnal and spend their nights traveling between burrows and hunting for rabbits, groundhogs, small rodents, frogs, toads and bird eggs.

When threatened American badgers hiss and growl and can release a smelly musk.

The chance of seeing a burrow of an American badger is much greater than seeing this nocturnal animal. Their burrows can be up to three metres underground and ten metres long. Any burrow 25 cm or wider is worth reporting to the badger hotline: 1-877-715-9299.

Program At A Glance

Eligible farm businesses may submit one (1) application to the 2023 SARPAL intake.

2023 Important Dates

Intake: March 1, 2023 to March 8, 2023

Eligible invoice dates: April 1, 2023 to December 15, 2023

Claim deadline: December 15, 2023

SARPAL Annual Funding Limit

Maximum cost-share funding:
\$20,000 per farm business

Supported Best Management Practices

-  Tree and Shrub Planting
-  Establishment of In-field Perennial Grass Strip(s)
-  Wetland Restoration
-  Grassland Restoration
-  Cross Fencing for Rotational Grazing
-  Fencing to Exclude Livestock from Woodland Areas
-  Forage Harvest Management (Delayed Haying)

Conservation Agreements:

Conservation Agreements, signed between participating producers and Environment and Climate Change Canada, are a requirement of SARPAL.

Get in touch with us:

Email: SARPAL@ontariosoilcrop.org

Phone: 519-826-4214

Website: www.ontariosoilcrop.org/oscia-programs/sarpal/

Conservation Agreements

An objective of the SARPAL program is to continue to assess the effectiveness of Conservation Agreements as a method of supporting species at risk recovery through habitat protection on private agricultural lands. Approved SARPAL applicants are required to sign a Conservation Agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada before funding is released. In the agreement, participants commit to maintain and monitor the funded BMPs for the duration of the agreement (or for the approved number of years for delayed haying projects).

Am I Eligible?

To be eligible for the Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands Program, you must meet the following criteria:

Be actively farming or own actively farmed land in Ontario

as demonstrated by:

A valid Farm Business Registration Number (FBRN)

OR

Owning property of 25 acres or more assessed as 'Farm'
(indicated on the latest Municipal Property Assessment Notice or Municipal Tax Bill)

OR

A Religious Exemption Letter provided by the OMAFRA Appeal Tribunal

OR

A Cultural Exemption Letter – First Nations producers can provide a letter from the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (IAPO) verifying the farm business operates in a First Nations community

Have a completed Environmental Farm Plan

(4th Edition) and Action Plan verified complete by OSCIA.

Need to update your EFP? Sign up for an in-person workshop at www.ontarioprograms.net or complete an electronic EFP at www.electronicefp.com. For more information on updating your EFP, call (519) 826-4214.

Have a valid Premises Identification Number (PID)

for the farm property where the proposed project will be completed. For more information call 1-888-247-4999 or visit www.ontariopid.com.


How Much Funding Could I Receive?

50% of Eligible Project Implementation Costs

SARPAL cost-share is up to 50% for farmers wishing to implement an eligible BMP activity on their farm property. You must enrol with OSCIA and submit a complete SARPAL Application Form and sketch, accompanied by any other required documentation for the BMP activity you are applying for.

Farm businesses can access up to \$20,000 in SARPAL cost-share per program year. Past participation does not count towards this limit.

Bobolinks breed and nest in grassland habitats, including: pastures, hayfields, abandoned/retired fields and meadows. Bobolinks build their nests on the ground. In the spring, males can be seen performing aerial display flights to attract mates. They repeatedly flutter up, singing their characteristic bubbling song, before descending. Bobolinks fly like a helicopter, moving in space slowly with rapidly-beating wings. Males can also be seen perched on shrubs and fence posts. While in Ontario during their breeding season, bobolinks feed on insects and seeds.

Bobolink
Threatened 



Steps To Participate

Barn Swallow
Threatened 

Step 1 Complete your Enrolment Form and SARPAL Application Form.

Check if your BMP requires additional information such as a letter of support before submitting it to OSCIA via:

Email: sarpal@ontariosoilcrop.org

Mail: Attn: Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands Program
Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association
1-367 Woodlawn Road West
Guelph, ON N1H 7K9

Enrolment and application forms can be accessed at www.ontariosoilcrop.org/oscia-programs/sarpal or by calling 519-826-4214.

Step 2 Receive notification of your application outcome from OSCIA.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email. Approvals will be granted by BMP project.

Step 3 Receive and sign a Conservation Agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Conservation Agreements will be distributed by OSCIA to producers with approved projects. Return the signed Conservation Agreement to OSCIA at your earliest convenience or with the claim.

Step 4 Complete approved project(s) and obtain proof of payment for all project costs.

Step 5 Submit your claim to OSCIA, including invoices, proof of payment, and Conservation Agreement.

Claim forms will be provided to approved applicants by OSCIA. Upon completion of your approved project, you must submit the **Claim Form** accompanied by invoices and proof of payment for all project costs, and an **In-Kind Claim Declaration Form** for any in-kind contributions (see page 18 for details on in-kind contributions). An **Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization Form** with a void cheque or direct deposit print-out from your financial institution must also be submitted to receive payment.

Step 6 Receive project funding from OSCIA and maintain project(s) for the duration of the Agreement.



Barn swallows forage in grassland habitats including hay fields, meadows and pastures. Barn swallows are aerial insectivores, meaning they feed on insects while in flight. By eating flies and other insects, barn swallows contribute to effective insect pest management on farms. Look for barn swallows flying gracefully in a darting, acrobatic motion.

When not flying, barn swallows are commonly observed perched on wires, tree branches and fence posts.

Species at Risk in Ontario

Each SAR is assigned a status that reflects the level of risk it faces. SARPAL supports species at risk under four categories in Ontario:

“Special Concern”

means the species lives in Ontario, is not endangered or threatened, but may become threatened or endangered due to a combination of biological characteristics and threats. Please note that species may also occur outside of Ontario.

“Threatened”

means the species lives in Ontario, is not endangered, but is likely to become endangered if threats are not addressed. Please note that species may also occur outside of Ontario.

“Endangered”

means the species lives in Ontario but is facing looming extinction or extirpation. Please note that species may also occur outside of Ontario.

“Extirpated”

means the species once lived in Ontario, but no longer does. Extirpated species are not extinct and live somewhere outside of Ontario.

SARPAL Projects Target Habitat for Species at Risk



Photo: Eleanor McGrath

Creating an environmental oasis on the farm

“These projects are expensive, and I won’t see anything other than the apple trees reach maturity, but it’s not for this generation, it’s for our children,” says Eleanor McGrath. “I get that people need to make money farming but there needs to be some balance with species at risk.”

Helping small farmers like us do these types of projects creates wildlife buffer zones in agricultural regions - we describe our farm as an environmental oasis.”

Read the full story on page 16.



Little Brown Myotis
Endangered

Loggerhead Shrike
Endangered



Henslow's Sparrow
Endangered



Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bee
Endangered



Grasshopper Sparrow
Special Concern



Eastern Foxsnake
Endangered/Threatened

Photo: Scott Gillingwater

Adding ecological value to the family farm

Fencing protects species at risk, prepares farm for rotational livestock grazing

By Lilian Schaer

Pam Jackson has always been interested in farming, but it wasn't until recently that she took the plunge to try to build a farming business of her own on the family farm in Caledon. She grew up on a cow-calf and no-till row crops mixed farm, and the pastures have been empty since her family transitioned out of cattle in the early 2000s as a result of the BSE crisis.

At the time, Jackson didn't see a future for herself in agriculture. However, the growth of a robust local food movement, consumer desire to reconnect with the environment, and her family farm's proximity to the Greater Toronto Area helped change her mind in recent years.

A forestry consultant who helps rural landowners with forest management decisions, Jackson's dream is to turn her family's farm into a grass-fed beef and ultimately mixed farming operation with rotational grazing.

For the last four years, she's been growing garlic, building a rotational grazing plan, exploring what she needs to pursue organic certification, and getting the farm ready for her first group of cattle sometime this year.

"The 100- acre home farm is on the Niagara escarpment. It's very hilly, and the pastures get cut to keep the trees down, but they are underutilized. We also have a provincially significant wetland that runs through the property, as well as hardwood and cedars forests," she explains. "I love the topography and natural features on this land. It's really important to me that we protect and even enhance these features as the new farm business is developed."

A wetland inventory completed by Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) uncovered some rare wetland species on the farm. The property is also home to Eastern Meadowlark, Barn Swallows, Bobolink and Snapping Turtle, all designated Species at Risk in Ontario.



Photo: Pam Jackson



With help from SARPAL, Jackson hired an agricultural consultant to develop a rotational grazing plan for the farm. She also cleaned up encroaching trees and shrubs, improved a windbreak, and got 27 acres of forage crop into a delayed haying program to protect grassland birds nesting in the spring.

“We had a sparse hedgerow with invasive species, so we enhanced that buffer of trees and shrubs, created a wildlife corridor and fenced out the cattle,” she says.

Fencing was also the focus of her most recent SARPAL project, which started last year. It included cross-fencing for rotational grazing on nine acres and permanent high tensile fencing to keep cattle out of the farm’s wetland and woodlot. A third of the fencing is yet to go in this spring, but Jackson is hopeful that all of her efforts will ultimately protect and enhance the farm’s ecosystems and species.

“With rotational grazing, the idea is that cattle have a heavy impact on the pasture for a short period of time, and then you move the animals and the grass can recover in between grazing. When fields are hayed instead of grazed, that’s just nutrients leaving the land,” she says. “I want nutrients to come back and stay to make the soil health better.”

Her long-term vision is to bring trees into the pasture to create a savannah with 20 - 25% shade and canopy cover. It’s an ecosystem she believes is most productive, with the trees fixing carbon and bringing nutrients into the soil without hindering grass growth. It will also avoid drought issues, she adds, and the shade will improve cattle welfare.

“With climate change, farmers should be striving to introduce as much resilience into their systems as possible. More than ever, we need our soils to be able to absorb and retain the rain that hits it,” she believes. “Longer periods of drought will be a reality, so when it does rain, we will likely be dealing with heavy rain events that come down hard. If we don’t have healthy, resilient soils, we will be in big trouble.”

SARPAL has been a springboard for Jackson, letting her complete in a few months what would otherwise have taken her years to do. It’s also given her access to expertise she says has been instrumental in bringing more ecological value to the farm.

“This funding has given me the opportunity to connect with the experts that I wouldn’t have realized otherwise. The folks I’ve had the chance to work with on these projects are helpful and encourage you to do the right thing; they work with you and are pragmatic about solutions that will work for your particular farm,” she says.

Supported Best Management Practices

BMP 1 – Tree and Shrub Planting

Funding is to support the planting of native trees and shrubs that will provide corridors for species such as the Eastern Foxsnake and American Badger and an early source of nectar and pollen for the Gypsy Cuckoo and Rusty-patched Bumble Bees. Applicants planting trees are encouraged to secure tree advisory services from a qualified forestry professional, such as a Conservation Authority or registered professional forester, who will undertake the work in compliance with the Professional Foresters Act of Ontario and according to the guidelines endorsed by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association (OPFA). It is important that the area where planting is to take place and the chosen tree species will not prove harmful to SAR. Only native trees or shrubs are eligible.

Cost-share applies to the total eligible project costs up to \$50 per tree, including trees, planting costs and in-kind contributions.

Types of supported tree planting projects are:

Reforestation (Block Tree Planting)

Block plantings require a plan, submitted with their application, from a qualified forestry professional, such as a Conservation Authority, registered professional forester, etc.

Tree Windbreaks

Trees planted along a pasture, in a field, or edge of field.

Buffer Strips

Permanently vegetated buffer establishment (a minimum of five metres in width) along a natural habitat area (e.g. stream, wetland, pond, forest, or grassland).

Eligible Activities

- ✓ Site preparation (limited to up to 50% of total project costs)
- ✓ Planting of native trees and shrubs (seeds, seedlings, potted stock or plugs)
- ✓ Weed and rodent control systems (mulch, mowing, tree guards, etc.)
- ✓ Planting of SAR trees and shrubs
- ✓ Establishment support as recommended and provided by a Professional Forester, or other qualified party
- ✓ Woodlot management practices that support SAR (e.g. releasing eastern flowering dogwood or American chestnut from canopy suppression)
- ✓ Tree Service Agreement for spring 2024 planting during the 2023 intake (See page 11 for more details)
- ✓ Permanent fencing to exclude livestock from the newly planted natural areas. Please note that cost-share applies to total eligible project costs of up to \$11.50/metre of fencing installed, inclusive of all costs and in-kind contributions associated with fencing
- ✓ Maintenance costs, associated with renovating existing tree plantings to enhance windbreak function

Ineligible Activities



- ✗ Ongoing maintenance costs (including maintenance and renovation of existing tree plantings)
- ✗ Planting invasive or non-native trees (e.g. European Larch and Norway Spruce); a list of native species can be found at www.ontariotrees.com
- ✗ Opportunity costs associated with payments for land taken out of production
- ✗ Trees, shrubs or other plantings for landscaping or around buildings
- ✗ Establishment of trees, shrubs, or other plantings that are intended for harvest for economic benefit within 15 years, such as fruit orchards, Christmas trees, ornamental nursery stock, etc.
- ✗ Tree spaded stock or the transplant of large caliper trees
- ✗ Vines, ornamentals and other species unlikely to offer value to SAR habitat
- ✗ In-kind contributions incurred in spring of 2024 associated with a Tree Service Agreement

BMP 2 – Establishment of In-Field Perennial Grass Strips

Funding is to support the planting and maintenance of perennial grass strips in field, including but not limited to contour buffer strips (minimum 3 metres wide from top of bank), grassed waterways, herbaceous wind barriers, headland retirement, and field edge plantings. Grass strips are encouraged to support other environmental objectives, including pollinator habitat or erosion control, so long as they do not reduce habitat suitability for the American Badger, grassland birds, Rusty-patched and Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bees and Monarch.

Mowing, if desired, must occur after July 15 for the duration of the agreement to protect nesting birds.

Eligible Activities

- ✓ Site preparation and planting of native grasses or legumes (less than 40% legumes) and wildflowers
- ✓ Habitat enhancement for SAR including brush or rock piles, pollinator plantings, deadwood, and snags

Ineligible Activities



- ✗ Ongoing maintenance costs (including maintenance and renovation of existing plantings)
- ✗ Planting invasive or non-native plants; a list of native species can be found at ontariowildflowers.com
- ✗ Opportunity costs associated with payments for land taken out of production
- ✗ Plantings for landscaping or around buildings
- ✗ Establishment of plantings that are intended for harvest for economic benefit within 15 years, such as biofuels
- ✗ Vines, ornamentals and other species unlikely to offer value to SAR habitat

Won't be able to complete your planting project in 2023? Consider Spring 2024 Planting!

- Planting must be done directly through a Conservation Authority or eligible Planting Delivery Agent and prepayment for all services and fees must be completed with proof of payment submitted to OSCIA by December 15, 2023
- A minimum of 50 trees for a windbreak and 500 trees for a block planting must be planted
- Applicant must enter into a Tree Service Agreement (provided by OSCIA to the applicant upon conditional approval of proposed project). The agreement must be signed by the applicant and the Planting Delivery Agent (e.g. the Conservation Authority) before being submitted to OSCIA
- A planting plan prepared by the Planting Delivery Agent that includes a site map and details on species and planting method must be submitted with the application
- All planting must proceed as identified in the planting plan

BMP 3 – Wetland Restoration

Wetlands have many benefits for farmers and wildlife, including flood mitigation, improved water quality, and habitat enhancement for SAR such as the Henlow's Sparrow, Barn Swallow, and Little Brown Bat. Funding is to support restoration of wetlands, returning them to their original size, depth and ecological function. To be eligible, all applications must include a letter of support from a Conservation Authority, technical specialist, or recognized conservation group (e.g. Ducks Unlimited Canada). The letter should reference:

- The original existence of a wetland (if possible)
- That previous alteration resulted in negative impact
- That ecological function can be restored

Funds will also support:

- Habitat enhancement for SAR including brush or rock piles, pollinator plantings, deadwood, and snags
- Permanent fencing to exclude livestock from the restored wetland. **Please note that cost-share applies to total eligible project costs of up to \$11.50/metre of fencing installed, inclusive of all costs and in-kind contributions associated with fencing**

Eligible Activities

- ✓ Earthwork, equipment rentals
- ✓ Ditch plugs
- ✓ Consultant fees
- ✓ Plant establishment


Ineligible Activities



- ✗ Work associated with irrigation ponds or landscaping
- ✗ Opportunity costs associated with payments for land taken out of production
- ✗ Planting invasive or non-native plants; a list of native species can be found at www.ontariowildflowers.com
- ✗ Vines, ornamentals and other species unlikely to offer value to SAR habitat
- ✗ Costs for permits
- ✗ Fencing not directly associated with livestock exclusion from the restored wetland area

Eastern meadowlarks breed and nest in grassland habitats, including: hayfields, meadows, grassy fencerows, and prairies. During breeding season, they can be heard singing their sweet song late into the day. Look for these birds on fence posts and hydro lines attracting mates with their bright yellow breast. Eastern meadowlarks walk through grasses, probing for insects in the ground with their long, sharp bills. When flying, they alternate between several rapid wing beats and short glides flying low over ground.



Eastern Meadowlark
Threatened 

BMP 4 – Grassland Restoration

Agricultural grasslands include hayfields and pasture composed of tame or native species that provide critical breeding habitat for Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark and Loggerhead Shrike. This BMP provides an opportunity to restore agricultural land to permanent grassland. Grazing and haying for on-farm use is permitted after July 15, but not for off-farm sales. Priority will be given to projects that are restoring native grasslands.

Funds will also support:

- Control of encroaching invasive trees and shrubs (i.e. buckthorn and Scots pine) in pastures through mowing or other mechanical means within reason (Activities must take place **after July 15** to protect nesting grassland birds). Applicants must demonstrate encroachment pressures through photographs and/or aerial photography. Funding will be determined at OSCIA's discretion.
- Habitat enhancement for SAR including brush or rock piles, pollinator plantings, deadwood, and snags

Eligible Activities

- ✓ Mixed planting of native grassland species (e.g. little bluestem, Indian grass, brown-eyed Susan) or non-native grassland species (e.g. timothy, orchard grass, clover - Less than 40% legumes; no more than 25% alfalfa)
- ✓ Site preparation
- ✓ Rental of specialized planting equipment
- ✓ Rental of appropriate equipment for mechanical removal of trees and shrubs
- ✓ Custom services for removal of encroaching trees and shrubs

Ineligible Activities



- ✗ Establishment of grasses and vegetation for harvest (e.g. biomass) or grazed before July 15
- ✗ Establishment of monocultures or biomass crops
- ✗ Purchase of cultivation equipment
- ✗ Maintenance and renovation of existing plantings
- ✗ Planting invasive species
- ✗ Opportunity costs associated with payments for land taken out of production
- ✗ Purchase of equipment of any kind, including tractors or self propelled equipment, mowers, and brush hogs
- ✗ Major clearing of grasslands, wetlands or forested land
- ✗ Activities primarily for landscaping or other purposes not directly related to mowing of trees and shrubs to improve grassland habitat
- ✗ Repeat claims under this BMP on the same pasture area
- ✗ Pasture clipping or other standard practices

TIP: Use a free online mapping application, such as Google Maps or OMAFRA's AgMaps to find aerial imagery and/or make a map of your property.



Rusty-Patched Bumble Bee
Endangered

BMP 5 – Cross-Fencing for Rotational Grazing

This BMP provides an opportunity to protect nesting grassland birds by incorporating rotational grazing with the intent of leaving some areas **ungrazed until after July 15**. The goal is to maximize existing forage resources through effective management and maintain ungrazed grassland bird refuge areas until mid-July.

Funding is to support new fencing and watering system infrastructure to strengthen rotational grazing systems and allow portions of pasture to remain unharvested (grazed or hayed) until after July 15. Rotational grazing systems must be implemented **on at least 10 acres of pasture and must include at least four (4) sections (fields or paddocks)** for rotation to qualify for this BMP.

Applicants will be required to submit a diagram of their proposed grazing and/or watering system with their application.

Fencing Systems

Only temporary interior fencing is eligible for cost-share; it is expected that perimeter fencing is already established. Cost-share applies to total **eligible project costs up to \$2.45/metre** of eligible fence installed or **\$5/metre if the purchase of a solar charger is necessary** to run the additional fencing.

Eligible Activities

- ✓ Fencing materials, including wire, posts, insulators, fasteners, rolling fence systems and gates
- ✓ Consultant fees to develop a Grazing Management Plan
- ✓ Purchase and installation of solar powered systems to support electric fencing

Ineligible Activities



- x Costs for income loss due to delayed grazing
- x Repair and maintenance of existing fencing
- x Perimeter fencing (this includes any sections of fencing along a property line)
- x Professional services not directly related to the Grazing Management Plan
- x Time, effort, and travel by applicant for planning activities
- x Any plan, assessment, report, etc. not prepared by a qualified third-party consultant/professional

Livestock Watering Systems

Eligible Activities

- ✓ Gravity fed systems
- ✓ Solar, wind, or motorized powered pumps
- ✓ Waterlines
- ✓ Storage tanks
- ✓ Water aeration systems on existing ponds/reservoir

Ineligible Activities



- x Watering systems not associated with rotational grazing system or system installed at the barn
- x Shelters for watering systems
- x Repair and maintenance of existing systems
- x New water supply (e.g. drilling a new water well)
- x Any plan, assessment, report, etc. not prepared by a qualified third-party consultant/professional

BMP 6 – Fencing to Exclude Livestock from Woodland Areas

Funding is to support permanent fencing to exclude livestock from forest/woodland areas and treed corridors (i.e., established windbreak, bufferstrips) to protect critical forage and habitat areas for Monarch, Eastern Foxsnake, Gypsy Cuckoo and Rusty-patched Bumble Bees. Fences must be at least three metres from any environmentally sensitive feature; this buffer zone must be permanently covered with vegetation (grasses or wildflowers). Fencing along a farm property boundary is not eligible for cost-share; a farm is expected to have adequate perimeter fencing already in place. **Please note that cost-share applies to total eligible project costs of up to \$11.50/metre of fencing installed, inclusive of all costs and in-kind contributions.**

Eligible Activities

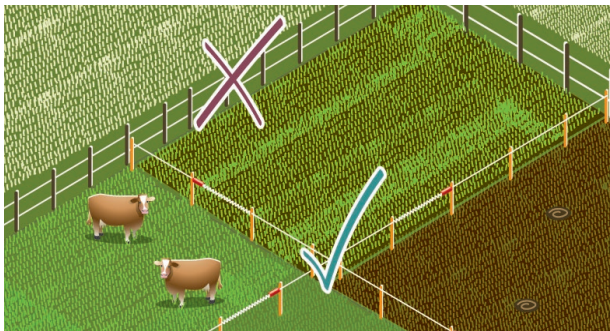
- ✓ Sections of permanent livestock fencing directly adjacent to a forested area on the farm property, materials could include: wire, posts, fasteners, equipment rental and labour to install

Ineligible Activities



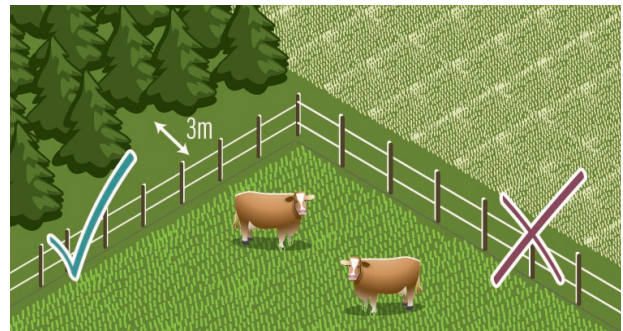
- ✗ Repair and maintenance of existing fencing
- ✗ Perimeter fencing around the farm property

What you need to know about fencing



BMP 5 – Cross-Fencing for Rotational Grazing

- Temporary, movable fencing
- Total project costs eligible for cost-share;
 - Conventional fencer: \$2.45/m
 - Solar powered fencer: \$5/m



BMP 6 – Fencing to Exclude Livestock from Woodland Areas

- Permanent fence (i.e. no movable, temporary installations)
- Up to \$11.50/m in total project costs eligible for cost-share

BMP 7 – Forage Harvest Management (delayed haying)

Grassland birds are particularly vulnerable while they nest between early May through to mid-July. Many managed Ontario grasslands (hay fields) are harvested at least once in that time frame, which is devastating to young grassland birds. Delaying the first cut of hay until **July 15** or later allows grassland birds time to fledge the nest, greatly increasing survival rates.

Funding for this BMP is determined based on size of the delayed haying field, and the demonstrated added benefits to grassland birds. No invoices are required. Eligible projects must be at least **10 continuous acres in size**.

Delayed haying projects are supported based on the results from the “Rating for Grassland Birds” self assessment in the application form, adapted from the booklet “[Farming with Grassland Birds](#)”. If you would like to delay haying on more than 3 fields, please complete additional self assessments.

Funding will be issued at a flat rate of \$25/ac. This is equivalent to flat rate project costs of \$50/ac supported at 50% cost-share. Eligible projects must demonstrate a “high” rating for grassland birds, and must be larger than 10 continuous acres in size, with no windbreaks or other obstructions within the field.

Creating an environmental oasis on the farm

Species at Risk program supports habitat creation

By Lilian Schaer

Nature is never far away at Springfield Farm, a 200-year old farm near the small South Glengarry hamlet of Apple Hill, Ontario.

It's where Eleanor McGrath, her husband Finbarr McCarthy and their four children grow grains and market garden produce, tap their maple trees for maple syrup, keep bees and are growing a new orchard of heritage apple varieties. It's also home to a wide range of species at risk, like Barn Swallow, Bobolink, Leopard Frog and Monarch Butterfly.

The family splits their time between Toronto and the eastern Ontario farm, producing food with a focus on sustainability and regenerative agriculture and working towards organic certification. About 60 of their approximately 118 acres are part of the Managed Forest Program and 22 acres are enrolled in the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program.

"Essentially our farm was farmed conventionally until 2017 by a tenant farmer who grew cash crops and used pesticides," says McGrath. "Since 2018 we have not used any pesticides and put much of the land into fallow. Only in 2020 did we start to use raised beds, grow grains and begin to see the incredible return of large numbers of at risk species."

When the family first purchased the farm, the farmer renting the land had encouraged removing tree windbreaks to gain more land for agricultural production. It was a project McGrath and her husband halted, but they quickly realized the wisdom in removing invasive and detrimental species like the Prickly Ash and Wild Grapevine that were choking out mature trees along the Beaudette River that runs through their property.

She had completed the Environmental Farm Plan and it was while researching project opportunities for her farm that she discovered the Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) program.

Delivered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada, SARPAL provides cost-share support to agricultural producers to implement practices that support habitat for 12 different species at risk.



They include American Badger, Barn Swallow, Bobolink, Eastern Foxsnake, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Grasshopper Sparrow, Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bee, Henslow's Sparrow, Little Brown Myotis, Loggerhead Shrike, Monarch butterfly and Rusty-patched Bumble Bee.

"Our kids are very environmentally versed, and our farm is home to a lot of interesting species - so SARPAL was a no-brainer for us," she says. "The program gave us the resources to do a project that would have been hard to complete otherwise."

With the help of an excavator, tractor and chainsaw, Prickly Ash, vines and dead trees - the Emerald Ash Borer had left its mark - that were choking out trees and crowding the river were removed and over 100 new trees were planted. They were native species like Dogwood, White Spruce, Weeping Willow and Oak, many of which McGrath was able to purchase through the local Raisin River Conservation Authority.

And it was a bonus when a professional gardener they had hired to help them identify and designate the species that needed to be removed discovered over 100 small sugar maple saplings growing along each side of the riverbed that they were able to transplant.

The area is now greatly cleaned up, according to McGrath, but still appropriately overgrown enough to serve as ideal habitat for various wildlife populations, including species at risk.

"We have so many Leopard Frogs and although we had coyotes, deer and beaver in abundance before, it's even more so since we finished the initial SARPAL project," she says. "It still has a sense of overgrown, majestic nature that I think is important for any species - and it is amazing to see the river clear through. We are also very excited to see how the second year will be for the various species returning in the spring."

The project was completed in fall of 2019, which McGrath notes was a blessing as the COVID-related lockdowns of 2020 would have prevented much of the work from being completed. And she's thankful to SARPAL not just for funding support, but also the opportunity to help species at risk - something she thinks all landowners should take a closer look at.

"These projects are expensive, and I won't see anything other than the apple trees reach maturity, but it's not for this generation, it's for our children," she says. "I get that people need to make money farming but there needs to be some balance with species at risk. Helping small farmers like us do these types of projects creates wildlife buffer zones in agricultural regions - we describe our farm as an environmental oasis."



In-Kind Contribution Policy

The applicant's in-kind labour and equipment use for the project, up to a maximum payment of \$2,000 as supported by an In-Kind Claim Declaration Form and reported on the Project Claim Form, may be considered eligible for cost-share.

Reasonable hours of labour invested by the applicant, his/her dependents, and business partner(s) may be claimed. Costs associated with completing the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP), education, project planning, supervision, or administration are not eligible for funding as in-kind costs. Eligible in-kind contributions are invested in the project in the form of unpaid labour and/or use of farm business equipment and may be claimed as follows:

- The maximum allowable labour rate is \$20 per hour. OSCIA will make a final determination on what a reasonable number of hours claimed is based on the BMP being implemented and the nature of the work performed.
- The maximum allowable in-kind equipment rate for a tractor and implement is \$50 per hour of operation. Applicable in-kind operator charges may be claimed along with the in-kind equipment rate, at up to the accepted maximum hourly labour rate.

If a business plans to claim in-kind contributions, accurate estimates must be reflected in the total project cost submitted with the SARPAL Application.

When making a project claim for in-kind contributions, the figure added to the Claim Form must be supported by an In-Kind Claim Declaration Form which details specific hours worked, dates the work was performed, by whom, and the hourly rate(s) charged. The In-Kind Claim Declaration Form will be provided to applicants upon final project approval.

Eligible In-Kind Contribution

- ✓ Applicant, applicant's business partner(s) or applicant's dependent and family members

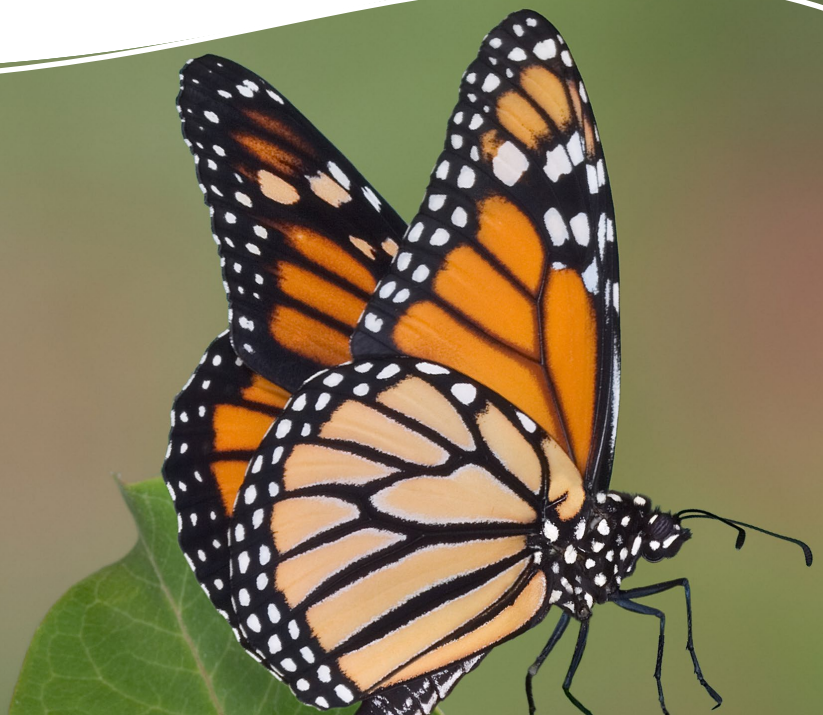
Ineligible



- ✗ Farm employees
- ✗ Rates that exceed \$20 per hour for in-kind labour
- ✗ Rates that exceed \$50 per hour for a tractor and equipment
- ✗ On-farm materials used for the project (e.g. fence, electric wire purchased outside of program year, etc.)
- ✗ Applicant/business partner completing EFP, designing project, filling out applications, supervising project implementation (i.e. any administrative tasks)

Monarch caterpillars can be found in meadows and other open areas containing milkweed plants, the only plant they feed on. Monarch butterflies can be found from June to October in southern Ontario. Look for monarchs in open, weedy areas, meadows and along roadsides with wildflowers that could provide nectar to feed on. Monarchs are an important pollinator species.

Monarch
Special Concern 



Limits of Funding

1. If the applicant goes ahead with the project before receiving final approval from OSCIA, they do so at the risk of forfeiting the cost-share if all terms and conditions are not satisfied.
2. OSCIA issues payments after projects have been completed and the required documentation (including a signed Conservation Agreement) is received. This means projects must be paid for in full by the applicant prior to cost-share being issued.
3. When determining the total estimated cost of the project, obtain quotes and be accurate regarding figures for all applicable materials, services, equipment and in-kind contributions. Please be very clear in your cost descriptions. Gross over-estimates lead to program dollars being unnecessarily allocated and can limit opportunities for other applicants.
4. The maximum cost-share contribution per farm business is \$20,000 in the 2023-2024 SARPAL program year.
5. SARPAL cost-share is available to new projects initiated on or after April 1, 2023 to December 15, 2023. No cost-share will be offered for project invoices issued before this date. To receive cost-share, all projects must be complete and operational and the complete SARPAL Claim Form received in the OSCIA Guelph office by December 15, 2023. OSCIA reserves the right to perform a project inspection at a mutually agreeable time.
6. SARPAL cost-share may be utilized by eligible applicants for approved Best Management Practices on farm properties owned, rented, leased, or otherwise under their control.
7. Stacking of SARPAL contributions towards the same project by two or more farm businesses is not permissible.
8. Applicants are entirely responsible for securing all necessary approvals and permits for the proposed project before starting construction and complying with all applicable municipal bylaws and provincial or federal regulations. OSCIA will require copies of permits obtained for some projects before issuing program funding.
9. Only invoices from vendors or service providers directly engaged in the business reflected in the item or service purchased in accordance with the approved SARPAL Application will be accepted with the project claim.
10. All invoices that support materials or services provided to a project must be completed at arm's length and originate with companies or individuals not in any way associated through ownership with the farm business making the project claim. Refer to Section 251 of The Income Tax Act for the detailed statutory provision for determining Arms Length relationships.
11. All eligible invoices must match the farm business name identified on the Enrolment Form.
12. Materials or products produced on-farm (e.g. fence posts) or purchased outside the eligible invoice dates cannot be cost-shared.
13. OSCIA reserves the right to require additional documentation and ultimately accept or reject submitted project invoices and proof of payment for cost-share consideration.
14. A single project may receive cost-share from one BMP category only. Multiple categories cannot be accessed for a single activity in efforts to maximize SARPAL contributions (i.e., cost-share will only be applied once to a project cost item).
15. Eligible projects must be new to the farm business, unless otherwise indicated in the project category description.
16. The farm business shall ensure that the total cost-share assistance from all sources, including other government or non-government programs, for eligible expenses shall not exceed 100 percent of project costs. The farm business is required to confirm at the time the claim is submitted all other sources of funding for eligible project expenses.
17. Across all BMP categories, HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) is not eligible for cost-share.
18. Across all BMP categories, maintenance, extended warranties, hand and power tools and attachments are not eligible for cost-share.
19. OSCIA will not accept additional SARPAL Applications after the Application Submission Deadline.
20. All applicable information on the SARPAL Application Form must be complete before it is submitted to OSCIA. Only proposed projects detailed on SARPAL Applications deemed to be complete by the OSCIA Guelph office will be considered for cost-share.
21. In order to be eligible for a SARPAL allocation, the same project cannot be funded by any other funding programs delivered by OSCIA (e.g. OFCAF) or by the Federal government. Other cost-share programs may be available from local Conservation Authorities, Ducks Unlimited Canada and other stewardship organizations. Farm businesses are encouraged to seek out these opportunities.
22. OSCIA will not accept additional SARPAL applications once the total SARPAL funding available for the program year has been committed.
23. SARPAL cost-share allocation is based on the eligible project costs outlined on the approved SARPAL Application Form. Accurate estimates must be reflected in the total project costs submitted on the SARPAL Application Form. If final project costs exceed the original estimates, there is absolutely no obligation by OSCIA to extend cost-share beyond the original allocation.
24. Information presented is the best available at the time of printing. Check with OSCIA for applicable updates. Material is subject to change without notice.
25. Site preparation costs that exceed 10-times the cost of planting/seeding are not eligible.

The views expressed herein are solely those of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association.

Species At Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands

Program At A Glance

Eligible farm businesses may submit one (1) application to the 2023 SARPAL intake.

2023 Important Dates

Intake: March 1, 2023 to March 8, 2023






Eligible invoice dates: April 1, 2023 to December 15, 2023

Claim deadline: December 15, 2023

SARPAL Annual Funding Limit

Maximum cost-share funding:
\$20,000 per farm business

Supported Best Management Practices

-  Tree and Shrub Planting
-  Establishment of In-field Perennial Grass Strip(s)
-  Wetland Restoration
-  Grassland Restoration
-  Cross Fencing for Rotational Grazing
-  Fencing to Exclude Livestock from Woodland Areas
-  Forage Harvest Management (Delayed Haying)



Conservation Agreements:

Conservation Agreements, signed between participating producers and Environment and Climate Change Canada, are a requirement of SARPAL.

Get in touch with us:

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