



Data Sources and Methods for the Habitat Secured for Species at Risk indicator

January 2015

Suggested citation for this document: Environment Canada (2015) Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators: Data Sources and Methods for the Habitat Secured for Species at Risk Indicator. Consulted on *day Month, year*. Available at: www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=en&n=DE93FF58-1.

ISBN: 978-1-100-25526-2

Cat. No.: En4-144/28-2015E-PDF

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1. Introduction

The Habitat Secured for Species at Risk indicator (www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=en&n=CBA85E96-1) is part of the Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators (CESI) program (www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=En&n=47F48106-1), which provides data and information to track Canada's performance on key environmental sustainability issues. This indicator is also used to measure progress towards the goals and targets of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (www.ec.gc.ca/dd-sd/default.asp?lang=En&n=CD30F295-1).

2. Description and rationale of the Habitat Secured for Species at Risk indicator

2.1 Description

The Habitat Secured for Species at Risk indicator (www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=en&n=CBA85E96-1) reports the amount of Canadian habitat that has been secured through the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) for Species at Risk for the benefit of species assessed to be "at risk" (Endangered, Threatened or of Special concern) by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). The indicator reports the cumulative number of square kilometres of habitat secured through legally binding agreements with financial assistance from the HSP from the inception of the program. The area of land and the length of shoreline improved in the latest fiscal year are also provided.

2.2 Rationale

The HSP is a cooperative funding program with an interdepartmental governance structure. Administered by Environment Canada and managed in cooperation with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Parks Canada, the HSP funds stewardship activities that protect, conserve or improve habitats for species assessed to be "at risk" by COSEWIC. Priority is given to projects addressing species listed as Endangered or Threatened under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*. The program overall supports voluntary activities related to habitat protection, recovery of species, and preservation of biodiversity. This includes outreach and education activities.

2.3 Recent changes to the indicator

The area of land and the length of shoreline improved are reported for the first time.

3. Data

3.1 Data source

Environment Canada's Species at Risk Funding Programs office uses the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) for Species at Risk tracking system to follow projects throughout their life cycles, from the proposal stage through approvals and results. The number of square kilometres of habitat protected under the HSP is determined annually based on final reports submitted for each project. The annual land area and shoreline length of habitat improved or restored is also drawn from project reports.

3.2 Spatial coverage

The indicator has national coverage.

3.3 Temporal coverage

Data have been collected annually since program inception in 2000–2001.

3.4 Data completeness

The indicator captures all square kilometres secured (legally binding agreements) through financial assistance provided by the HSP for the period from April 1, 2000 to March 31, 2014.

In addition to legally binding agreements, the HSP also supports other habitat protection measures, through the direct actions of landowners, land managers and conservation agencies. The land area and shoreline length improved or restored describe annual stewardship actions that improve the quality of habitat for species at risk, but do not include all types of stewardship activities.

3.5 Data timeliness

The indicator is current to March 31, 2014.

4. Methods

The Habitat Secured for Species at Risk indicator is the sum of the species at risk habitat areas (in square kilometres) secured through legally binding protection measures with the financial assistance of the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) for Species at Risk. The area secured is reported by project administrators and tracked using a dedicated database.

Under the HSP, habitat for species at risk is secured through a variety of activities. Examples include land purchases, donations and long-term agreements such as conservation easements. For each year, the cumulative habitat secured through legally binding protection measures is calculated by adding newly secured square kilometres to existing securements.

The land area improved or restored and the length of shoreline improved or restored cannot be added across years because projects may extend over several years on the same parcel. Adding the land area improved over years, for example, would result in the same parcels being counted multiple times. Therefore, the land area and shoreline length improved are reported only for the most recent year.

5. Caveats and limitations

- While the goal of the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) for Species at Risk is to support the conservation and recovery of species at risk, this indicator is simply a measure of the quantity of habitat secured, not a measure of the success of species conservation or recovery, or of the quality of habitat secured. For further information on the status of species at risk in Canada, see the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) (www.cosewic.gc.ca/eng/sct5/index_e.cfm).
- Although voluntary conservation agreements with landowners contribute to habitat conservation and protection under the HSP, this indicator measures only habitat that has been secured through legally binding mechanisms. This ensures that habitat included in the indicator is secured for the long term.

- Some areas secured under the HSP may, with time, be formally recognized by a reporting jurisdiction as a "protected area" under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition as applied in Canada. These areas might include, for example, lands secured by purchase or donation. Further details are available in the Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators (CESI) Data Sources and Methods for the Protected Areas Indicators document (www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=en&n=5FABE1CD-1).

6. References and further reading

6.1 References

Government of Canada (2014) Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Retrieved on 24 September, 2014. Available from: www.cosewic.gc.ca/eng/sct5/index_e.cfm.

Environment Canada (2014) Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. Retrieved on 24 September, 2014. Available from: www.ec.gc.ca/hsp-pih/default.asp?lang=En&n=59BF488F-1.

6.2 Further reading

Department of Justice Canada (2002) *Species at Risk Act*. Retrieved on 24 September, 2014. Available from: laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/S-15.3/page-1.html.

Government of Canada (2014) Species at Risk Public Registry. Retrieved on 24 September, 2014. Available from: www.sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=24F7211B-1.

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