



# Restoration of the Lake Sturgeon in the Lower Range of the Saint-François River in the Centre-du-Québec Project 2014-2015

With support from the Government of Canada's [Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk](#) (Species at Risk Stream), the Conseil des Abénakis Odanak (CAO) led a one-year project in 2014–2015 to evaluate the population abundance of Eastern Sand Darter in the Saint-François River, a tributary of the St. Lawrence River.

## WHY THIS PROJECT IS IMPORTANT

The St. Lawrence River and its many tributaries in Quebec provide valuable marine and freshwater habitats for many aquatic species. These include the *Species At Risk Act* listed [Eastern Sand Darter](#) (*Ammocrypta pellucida*, Threatened) and the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada assessed [Lake Sturgeon—Upper St. Lawrence populations](#) (*Acipenser fulvescens*, Threatened). Many of these species are threatened by the continued decline in the quality of these aquatic habitats due to human activities along the St. Lawrence waterways (e.g. agriculture and industrial activities). Lake Sturgeon is of high cultural significance to the Abenaki First Nation and evaluating its reproductive success will help assess future threats to this species.

## WHAT WAS DONE

The population abundance of Eastern Sand Darter was surveyed using a variety of sampling techniques, including the use of a drag net in sections of the Saint-François River. Paired with data from earlier projects, the availability of suitable habitat for the Eastern Sand Darter was assessed and this information will be used to assist future identification of critical habitat for this species. Breeding Lake Sturgeon were surveyed by monitoring biological variables of the fish using gillnets and drift nets to estimate the number of eggs deposited and larvae produced. In addition, river water flow was measured as a first step toward improving water management to minimize future impacts on both of these species. The CAO used social media to update the public on project activities and an article was published in the First Nation's community newspaper.



## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THIS PROJECT

- Produced reports on Eastern Sand Darter and Lake Sturgeon habitat distribution and availability, threats, and the genetic links to freshwater habitats in the area. This information will be used in future habitat assessments and restoration projects
- Increased capacity within the Abenaki First Nation community to conduct future fish and fish habitat monitoring projects for species at risk.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROJECT

The information gathered by the CAO will contribute to the monitoring and protection of fish in the Upper St. Lawrence River watershed, notably Eastern Sand Darter and Lake Sturgeon.

### INVESTMENT: 2014-2015

Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk Funds:	\$60,000
Partner Support Leveraged:	\$27,200
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$87,200</b>