



Consultation Meeting on the potential Listing of wild Plains Bison under the federal Species at Risk Act

Species At Risk Act Consultation, Cooperation, and Accommodation Project
in Partnership with the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER)

Wendy Eskowich, Consultation Biologist
Richard Wiacek, Wildlife Biologist

Canadian Wildlife Service – Prairie Region
Environment and Climate Change Canada (CWS-PRA-ECCC)

Aug 31 and Sept 6 2022



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada

Purpose of Meeting

- Share information about the federal process for **assessing and potentially listing** wild Plains Bison under the Species at Risk Act (SARA);
- Discuss the current status of wild Plains Bison in Canada including threats and reasons for the COSEWIC designation;
- have regional staff available to engage in a Q&A to clarify the Species at Risk Recovery Process and available funding opportunities to support Indigenous participation in this process
- **provide opportunity for participants to submit verbal comments or concerns about the potential listing of wild Plains Bison****
- Give space for participants to speak to the significance of Plains Bison for their communities and

Provide a venue to build relationships and start a broader discussion on the recovery of wild Plains Bison in Canada.

What is a “Species at Risk” ?

- **Species** = A plant or animal
- **At risk** = there is a possibility, or “some risk”, that the species may disappear from *the wild* in *Canada*,



unless the (human made**) threats that are causing the decline in their numbers, are removed or reversed.

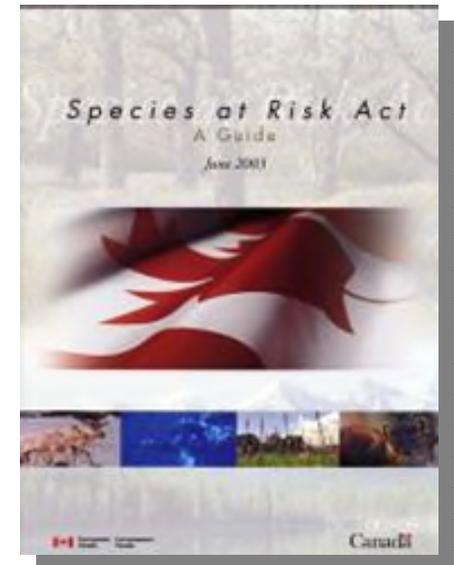
**includes climate change

What is the *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*?

A *national* (federal) approach for conservation of species that may be at risk of disappearing in the wild in Canada

The purpose of the federal *Species at risk Act (SARA)* is to:

- **prevent** species from becoming extinct by *protecting* individuals and their habitat
- **recover** species that are endangered or threatened as a result of *human activity and/or developments*
- work in a complimentary fashion with provincial legislation.



The Species At Risk Act (SARA)

Recognizes that:

“the roles of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and of wildlife management boards established under land claims agreements in the conservation of wildlife in this country are essential,”

and that:

“the traditional knowledge of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada should be considered in the *assessment* of which species may be at risk and *in developing and implementing recovery measures*”

SARA recognizes Indigenous Rights

SARA respects the protection of Aboriginal Rights as affirmed in the constitution

Canadian Constitution (Section 35):

“The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.”

SARA (section 3):

“For greater certainty, nothing in this Act shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from the protection provided for existing aboriginal or treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada by the recognition and affirmation of those rights in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.”

Who decides if a species is “at risk”?

COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) Independent group of experts, that gather knowledge to **assess** how “at risk” a species is, and oversee the development of a status report.

- use the best **biological** information available at the time, including scientific knowledge, community knowledge and aboriginal traditional knowledge**
 - is the population declining;
 - is the range shrinking;
 - are there major new threats
- Socio-economic considerations are NOT factored into COSEWIC’s assessment

****Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittee** provides ATK to COSEWIC for the assessment process, from literature, sought from Indigenous communities, or gathered directly from ATK holders depending on the species and resources available.



Status – How “at risk” is a species?

Extinct – No longer exists anywhere in the world.

Extirpated No longer exists in the wild *in Canada*

Endangered

Facing imminent extirpation or extinction
(close to disappearing from Canada)

Threatened

Likely to become endangered unless
threats are removed

Special Concern

May become threatened or
endangered because it is sensitive
to human activities or natural events

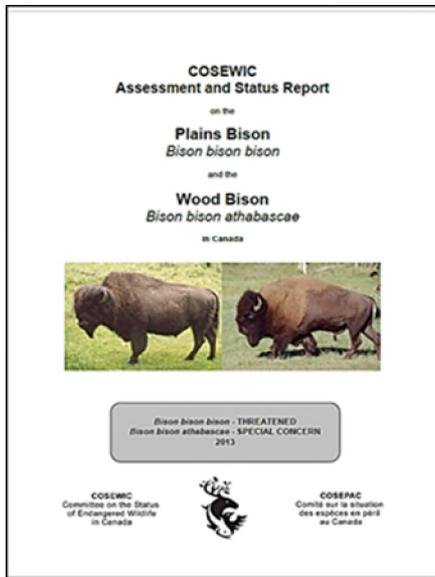
NOT AT RISK or No longer at Risk

Or Data Deficient



COSEWIC ASSESSMENT

COSEWIC sends its assessments and supporting evidence to the Minister of the Environment (also posted on the SARA Registry)



5 herds of wild
Plains Bison
were assessed
as Threatened



- Minister of Environment receives the 'Assessment of risk' and status reports from COSEWIC, and has 90 days to respond by indicating next steps (=Response Statements posted on SARA registry)
- Starts the Listing Consultation phase - was done in 2015, but re-consulting now

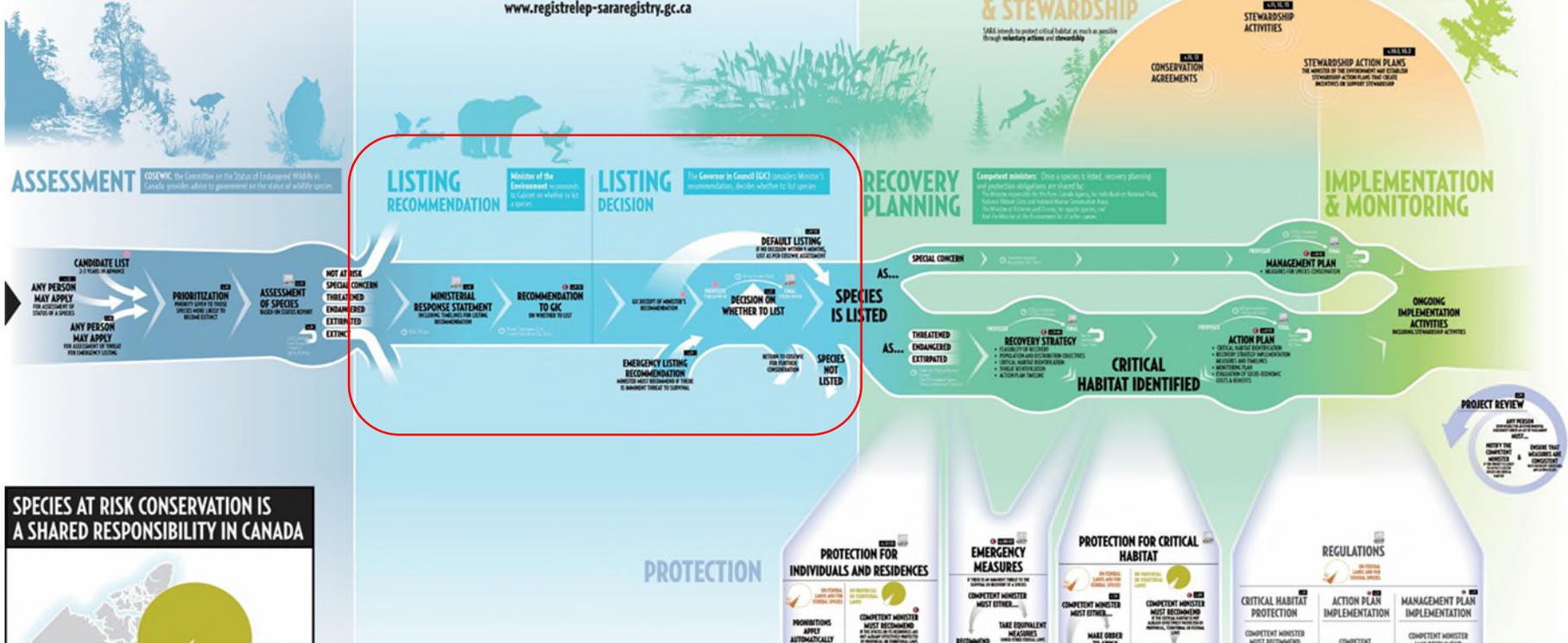
SPECIES AT RISK ACT: Process Map

The Species at Risk Act (SARA) aims to:

1. Prevent **wildlife species** from becoming extirpated or extinct,
2. Provide for the recovery of extirpated, endangered or threatened **wildlife species**, and
3. Manage "species of special concern" to prevent them from becoming endangered or threatened.

Wildlife species includes species, subspecies, varieties, or geographically or genetically distinct populations of animals, plants or other organisms that are wild by nature and native to Canada or whose range has extended into Canada for at least 50 years.

www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca



SPECIES AT RISK CONSERVATION IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN CANADA

- Listing- the process by which a species at risk is added to the Species At Risk Act- on Schedule 1 = the official "List" of Species at Risk in Canada.
- Once "listed", the measures *to protect and recover* the listed species as outlined in SARA, come into effect. Therefore we consult with potentially affected parties and invite comments to help inform that Listing decision.

Protections If Listed

SARA: protection of individuals & residences: “General Prohibitions”

- apply to species listed as **extirpated**, endangered or **threatened (PLBI)** :

No person shall:

- kill, harm, harass, capture or take an individual
- possess, collect, buy, sell or trade an individual, or any part
- damage or destroy the residence of one or more individuals

- General prohibitions apply **automatically****:

- on all federal lands (includes PCA)
- to aquatic species anywhere they occur.
- to protected migratory birds (MBCA 1994) anywhere they occur



- **Note: *habitat*** is NOT protected *upon listing*-this occurs later in the SARA cycle, however *if* wild Plains Bison is listed, then it will move through the SARA cycle-critical habitat will eventually be identified and protected *for this TH* species.
- ****** do not apply automatically on private or P/T lands for other terrestrial species. A GIC order is needed to apply the prohibitions to these lands, if necessary (Minister must first form an opinion).

Pre-Listing Consultation for Plains Bison

What: **May 4** Email from Prairie region: SARA.PNR@EC.gc.ca
Subject: Seeking comments on the potential federal Listing of wild Plains Bison and Invitation to Workshop May 25, 2022

- Consultation Booklet (easy read): Listing process
- Info on submitting comments by mail, phone or email to SARA registry: ec.registrelp-sararegistry.ec@canada.ca
- Map of the wild Plains Bison herds

When: **Comment period open from May- September 9, 2022**

Why: help inform Minister's recommendation on whether to List or Not List wild Plains Bison; voice your opinion

- to provide input on the potential impacts, especially possible social & economic impacts /benefits** IF PLBI is listed
- to share ideas on how to approach the threats to the species

Today: we can submit any social or economic or other comments/concerns you might wish to share on the potential listing of wild Plains Bison

Things to consider- to have meaningful involvement in SARA listing decision

When deciding whether to list a species, the Minister considers:

- **Recommendations** from (COSEWIC) and ATK subcommittee
- **Do wild Plains Bison herds support livelihoods** (e.g. through harvesting, subsistence or medicine)
- Potential **impacts to people's activities** if PLBI were to be listed
- Potential **cultural, social, or economic costs or benefits** to individuals, communities or organizations
- Do PLBI provide environmental/ecosystem benefits?
- If **current or planned activities** overlap with PLBI occurrence in your area, and if those activities **may harm** the species and/or destroy part of its habitat
- Any **other information** people choose to share during consultation

Do you think that listing wild Plains Bison would result in any **cultural, social, or economic costs and/or benefits** to you, your community/organization?

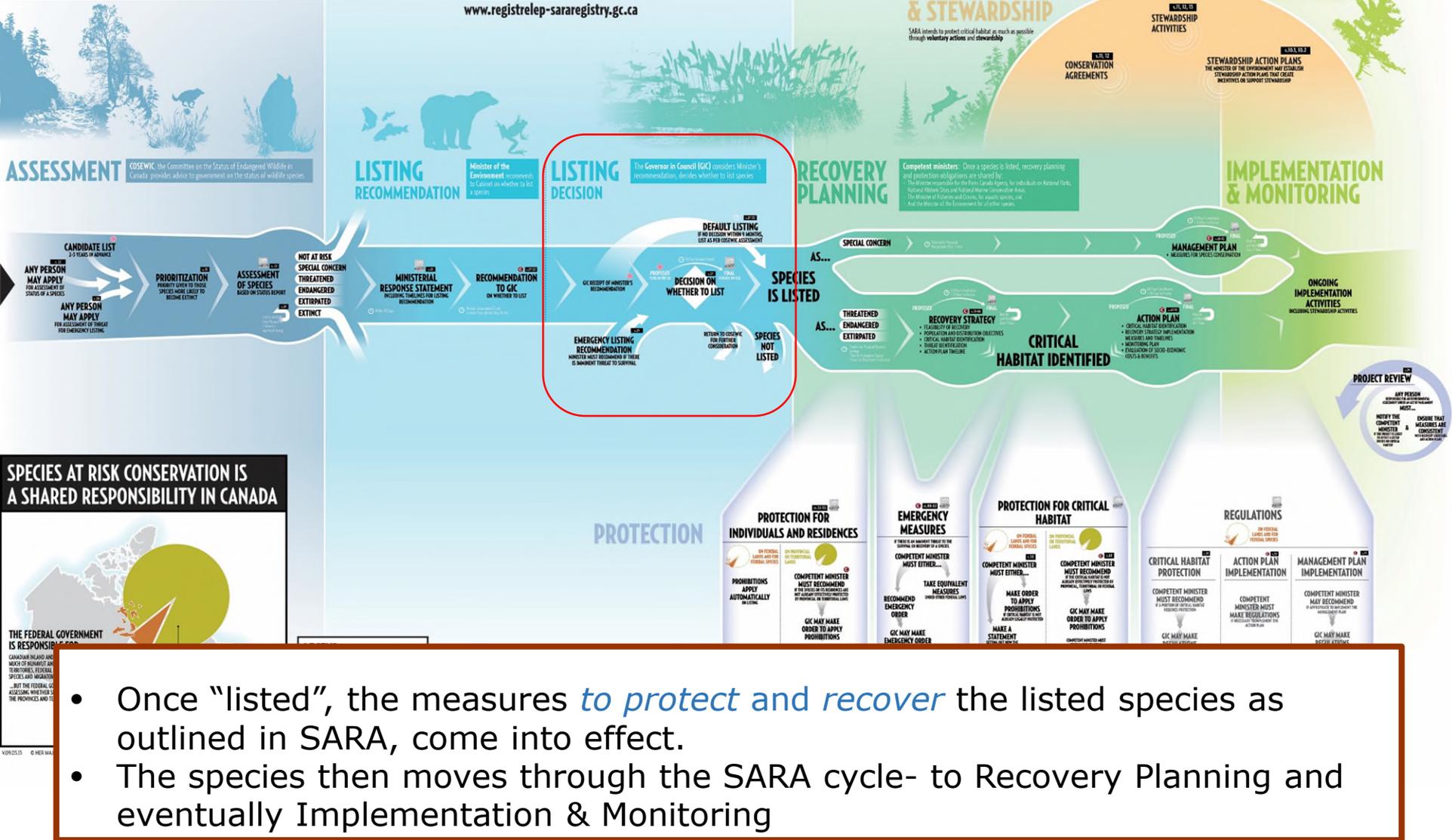
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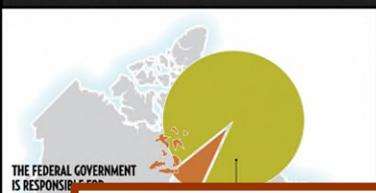
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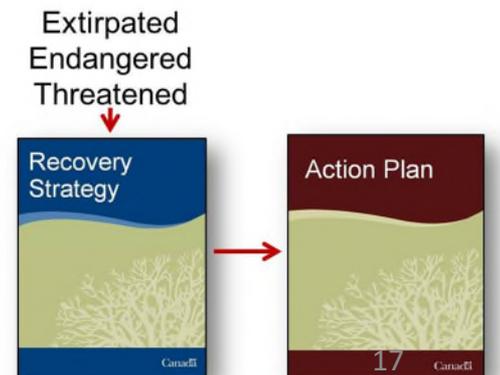
- Once "listed", the measures *to protect and recover* the listed species as outlined in SARA, come into effect.
- The species then moves through the SARA cycle- to Recovery Planning and eventually Implementation & Monitoring

Recovery Planning: Requirements

If Plains bison is Listed as Threatened - a **recovery strategy** will be prepared

- Parks Canada Agency will likely lead on the document
- High level strategic document
- **includes identification of Critical Habitat (CH), to the extent possible**
- Depending upon where CH is identified, it can have impacts, so the RS is prepared **in consultation** with directly affected parties
- A Recovery Strategy also includes timelines for an Action Plan

An Action Plan outlines priority recovery
“measures” to be taken
= “actions on the ground”



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ASSESSMENT

COSEWIC, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, provides advice to government on the status of wildlife species.

LISTING RECOMMENDATION

Minister of the Environment recommends to Cabinet on whether to list a species.

LISTING DECISION

The Governor in Council (GIC) considers Minister's recommendations, decides whether to list species.

RECOVERY PLANNING

Competent ministers: Once a species is listed, recovery planning and protection obligations are shared by: the Minister responsible for the Species at Risk Agency for consultation on National Parks, National Historic Sites and Cultural Properties, Government of Yukon, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Wildlife Species Unit, and the Minister of the Environment for a Federal Species.

VOLUNTARY ACTIONS & STEWARDSHIP

SARA intends to protect critical habitat as much as possible through voluntary actions and stewardship.

LEVEL 1 STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

STEWARDSHIP ACTION PLANS
THE MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT MUST DEVELOP STEWARDSHIP ACTION PLANS THAT CREATE INCENTIVES OR SUPPORT STEWARDSHIP

LEVEL 2 CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

MANAGEMENT PLAN

NEEDS FOR SPECIES CONSERVATION

ACTION PLAN

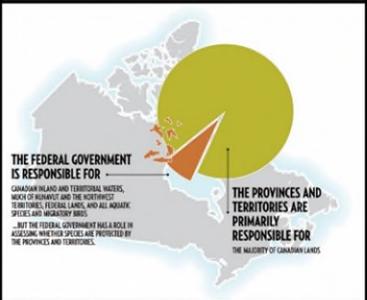
CRITICAL HABITAT IDENTIFICATION
RECOVERY STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION
MONITORING PLAN
EVALUATION OF RECOVERY STRATEGY RESULTS & REVIEWS

PROJECT REVIEW

ANY PERSON
APPLY FOR PROJECT REVIEW
MUST...
NOTIFY THE COMPETENT MINISTER & ENSURE THAT MEASURES ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE MANAGEMENT PLAN



SPECIES AT RISK CONSERVATION IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN CANADA



LEGEND

- Standard Process Not Required by the Act
- Obligation to Consult and/or Cooperate
- Section Reference
- Timelines (Legislated or Policy)
- Requirement to Publish on the Species at Risk Registry

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IMPLEMENTATION & Monitoring

Implementation

ACTION PLANS are written

- Further critical habitat identification if required
- monitoring plan
- Includes specific conservation measures/on the ground actions-timelines

Initiate actions to **formally protect Critical Habitat**

- on all identified lands = federal, provincial and private
 - Done **in cooperation with affected groups**.
- SARA intends to protect critical habitat as much as possible through **voluntary actions** and **stewardship** (s.10.1,10.2,11,12,13)

Monitoring- Report every 5 years on progress in carrying out/ implementing *the actions* to help species recover.

Evaluation & Re-Assessment- every 10 years (or sooner) species is **re-assessed by COSEWIC = SARA cycle**
eg. Peregrine Falcon – reassessed- SC to No Longer at Risk



Questions?

on the SARA Cycle- to help understand the potential Listing process of Plains Bison.

Over to Richard
Current Status of wild Plains Bison

(More detailed discussion and Q & A after his presentation)

Recap Questions

After hearing the presentations:

Q1 Do you think that Listing PLBI is an effective step for the protection of the species?

Yes

No

Don't know

Q2. Do you think that Listing of PLBI is an effective step for the recovery of the species?

Yes

No

Don't know

Discussion Questions to inform the Listing decision:

In your community/territory:

1. Do the wild herds of Plains Bison support livelihoods, e.g. through harvesting, subsistence or medicine?
2. Do the wild herds of Plains Bison provide cultural or spiritual benefits?
3. Do the wild herds of Plains Bison provide environmental benefits?

How would listing the wild herds of Plains Bison impact you and/or your community?

1. What are some costs and/or benefits that would result with listing wild herds of Plains Bison?
2. Are there any current or planned activities that would be impacted by listing wild Plains Bison?

Discussion Questions: for Recovery Planning/ Implementation IF Plains Bison are listed

1. Are there any specific threats in your community/territory that have not been identified, or conservation approaches that should be added?
2. What conservation actions do you think are necessary in order to recover wild Plains Bison?
3. Are there any current conservation actions for one or more of the wild Plains Bison herds occurring within your community/territory or any actions that could be implemented on your lands?
4. How would you like to be involved in the development of a future recovery strategy for this species, if it is listed?

CONTACTS – CWS Prairie Region

Thank you

ECCC Consultation Biologist (Qs about SARA Listing process)
Wendy Eskowich (Wendy.Eskowich@ec.gc.ca)

Plains Bison biologist

Richard Wiacek Richard.Wiacek@ec.gc.ca

SARACCA project lead/Funding

Paulson Des Birsay Paulson.DesBrisay@ec.gc.ca

Working together to increase Indigenous representation
in the federal recovery planning process, to help
conserve and recover Species at Risk

BREAK

Capacity Funding

1. Funding to support participation in species-specific workshops and/or meetings organized by CIER/ECCC

To provide funding for community members, staff, elders and knowledge holders to share their time and cover in-person meeting expenses. Funding amounts are based on treasury board of Canada rates. Details on available funding will be provided in individual session invitations.

Capacity Funding

2. Capacity funding to support information sharing for federal SAR Listing and Recovery planning.

To help address possible capacity challenges and work better together, ECCC is partnering with CIER, who will administer federal capacity funding for those wishing to share data, knowledge and other information with ECCC about terrestrial SAR but need some support in order to do so. Can involve approaches that can work for everyone (e.g. MOUs, protocol agreements, data sharing agreements). Can support honorariums, travel, room rental, hospitality, professional services, indigenous knowledge collection, document review and written comments).

Third call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs)

- **Additional targeted funding** to directly support Indigenous peoples' and organizations' meaningful participation in **currently active/open, listing consultations and recovery planning for terrestrial species at risk, and to address immediate threats to species and their habitats.**
- National *Information* session will be **tomorrow May 26**
- **See CIER email sent May 13 for info on how to register, and** attached documents (Overview of Funding; EOI ([NEW](#)) Form)
- **EOI deadline is June 17, 2022**
- **Decisions/allocation funds by:**
- **Project Reports must be completed by Feb 2023**

Funding for Species at Risk Work

- **Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (AFSAR):** <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/programs/aboriginal-fund-species-risk.html>
- **Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP):** <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/programs/habitat-stewardship-species-at-risk.html>
- **Critical Habitat Interdepartmental Program (CHIP)**
- **Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL)**
- **Canada Nature Fund (CNF):** <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/nature-legacy/fund.html>
 - Indigenous Guardians: ec.gardiensautochtones-indigenousguardians.ec@canada.ca
 - Priority Places
 - Community Nominated Priority Places
 - Challenge / Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas
- **Nature-Smart Climate Solutions:** <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/programs/nature-smart-climate-solutions-fund.html>
- **Directed Funding**

Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (AFSAR) and Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP)

AFSAR

- Helps build capacity to participate fully in SARA implementation
- All Indigenous communities and organizations located in Canada are eligible for funding
- Funding and duration: 1-3 years, must include 20% match (cash and/or in-kind), suggested minimum project \$10,000

Eligible Species:

- Must target Schedule 1 of SARA (except extirpated) and/or species that have been assessed by COSEWIC as endangered, threatened or special concern
- Can include culturally significant species
- Program prioritizes a few species each year for funding but inclusion of “priority species” is not required

HSP

- Differs from AFSAR in that non-Indigenous applicants are also eligible and projects must include a 1:1 match (cash and/or in-kind)

Critical Habitat Interdepartmental Program (CHIP)

- CHIP is a directed funding program focused on the conservation and recovery of Species at Risk and the restoration and protection of its Critical Habitat (CH)
- Online content will be available by the end of June 2021
- Eligible project activities include, but are not limited to: SAR and CH surveys, CH mapping, SAR reintroduction, monitoring
- Eligible recipients include federal organizations, which will partner with First Nations for projects on reserve lands

Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL)

Funding for agricultural producers to implement voluntary stewardship actions that conserve species at risk.

- In SK-supports projects that engage the agricultural sector in preserving key wildlife habitat. Potential initiatives through this project are designed to fit landowners' unique circumstances, and will include new and inventive conservation strategies that meet the needs of producers and habitat. The work will take place over five years in southwestern Saskatchewan, in areas covered by the South of the Divide Conservation Action Program (SODCAP Inc.), who will also be involved in the delivery of the pilots.
- In AB, funding to Canadian Cattlemen's Association to carry on conservation activities with beef producers to protect Greater Sage Grouse critical habitat in the Grassland Natural Region of southeast Alberta. The CCA will again partner with MULTISAR, Cows and Fish, Alberta Beef Producers, and the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef to deliver the latest SARPAL project.

Canada Nature Fund

- The Canada Nature Fund is the name given to a number of funding programs which together support the protection of Canada's ecosystems, landscapes, and biodiversity—including species at risk
- **This umbrella fund includes:**
 - Priority Places
 - Community Nominated Priority Places
 - Indigenous Guardians
 - Challenge / Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas

Priority Places and Community Nominated Priority Places (CNPP)

- **11 Priority Places across Canada identified by ECCC (2 in BC)**
- CNPPs are hotspot areas for species at risk outside of the Priority Places
- The goal is to develop and implement ecosystem-based conservation plans
- Partners to work together on shared priority actions, such as:
 - habitat stewardship
 - habitat restoration
 - targeted education and outreach

Indigenous Guardians

- **Indigenous Guardians Pilot aims to:**
 - Support existing and new Indigenous guardians initiatives through the development of bilateral relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Metis
 - Facilitate sharing of experience and best practices
 - Conduct a program evaluation to support the building of a business case for long-term funding
- **Example activities:**
 - Species and habitat protection
 - Data collection and monitoring
 - conservation planning and land-use management
- **Budget 2021 announced renewed funding for the Pilot**
 - More details will become available over the next months

NATURE-SMART CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

- A minimum of \$36M in funding was approved for Indigenous led restoration initiatives over 10 years (2021-2022 to 2030-2031)
- Funding will be administered on a distinctions-based approach to support on-the-ground initiatives
- Aims at restoring degraded ecosystems, protecting wildlife, and improving land and resource management practices
- **Ecosystem examples:**
 - Wetlands
 - Grasslands
 - Peatland
 - Agricultural
 - Forests