

## **Brief Overview of the SARA Minister's Round Table**

**November 17, 2014**

The Species at Risk Act (SARA) requires that, at least every two years, the federal Minister of the Environment convene a round table of persons interested in matters respecting the protection of wildlife species at risk in Canada.

The fifth SARA round table was held in Ottawa on November 17, 2014 and involved representatives from government, Aboriginal communities, industry, wildlife management boards, ranchers, hunters and trappers, and non-governmental organizations.

The discussion focused on areas where the Federal government can increase collective success in conserving species at risk and improve implementation of SARA. These included Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK), SARA and the North, and efforts to enhance stewardship in the protection of species at risk.

### Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge

Participants identified a number of key elements needed for effective and appropriate consideration of ATK in SARA implementation, including: an ongoing commitment to considering and applying ATK throughout the SARA process; funding and other support for working with ATK holders; ongoing education and awareness efforts; adequate infrastructure to work with ATK holders to gather ATK (e.g., Wildlife Management Boards and processes in place in communities) ;and increased process flexibility in applying this knowledge.

A need for increased transparency and upfront communication about the objectives, intentions, and requirements of project or program was identified by numerous participants. For Aboriginal communities, it must be clear how and why they are being engaged in providing their ATK and how their ATK is going to be specifically applied. Participants noted that Aboriginal communities are more likely to work with the Federal government if project or program leaders “close the loop” with ATK holders, explaining how and why their ATK was applied and the outcomes of the initiative.

Participants also suggested that the Federal government increase the role, authority and capacity of Aboriginal communities to participate in all stages of the SARA implementation process, including the gathering and incorporation of ATK. They also noted the importance of enhanced access to funding by ATK holders and their communities to build longer-term capacity to support conservation of species at risk.

### SARA and the North

With respect to the North, participants called for greater collaboration, coordination, education and communication among and between all levels of government, wildlife management boards,

and communities, as early as possible in the SARA process. This requires fostering greater awareness of existing legislative and policy frameworks in the North, ensuring that participants are informed and truly understand how their advice and recommendations will be incorporated into all stages of the decision-making process, and working towards more meaningful communication and engagement with people on the ground (i.e. people who live with the species and are custodians of the land).

They also noted the importance of working proactively to take conservation action before species become at risk in the North. This includes working more actively with wildlife management land use planning boards and making funding available to support a range of data and planning needs in the North. Participants also highlighted the need to adopt landscape and ecosystem approaches when dealing with species at risk, as opposed to focusing on individual species. At the same time, they noted that at present neither the wildlife management boards nor the land use planning boards have adequate data or resources to address cumulative effects on species.

### Enhancing Stewardship

An overall theme emerging from the discussion on stewardship was the importance of maintaining an early, open, and transparent dialogue between the Federal government, other levels of government, land owners and land managers. Participants emphasized that this is crucial to the longer-term success of protection and recovery efforts.

Participants welcomed the Federal government's interest in innovative stewardship tools, while noting that existing tools should not be neglected. They suggested that the Federal government look at successful efforts in other jurisdictions (e.g. the US Endangered Species Act), as well as existing voluntary initiatives that stakeholders are familiar with (e.g. environmental farm plans, agricultural beneficial management practices, industry certification), and market-based incentives such as the Alternative Land Use Services program or habitat banks.

Overall, participants emphasized there is no one-size fits all solution to stewardship, and that what might work for a small landowner is very different from what will work for a large resource developer. They noted that effective stewardship tools will likely demonstrate the following characteristics: be results-based; have adequate monitoring; be adaptive and flexible; and be informed by science and local/community knowledge.

Participants underscored the importance of results-based stewardship actions moving forward, and advised the Federal government develop concrete next steps for initiating pilot projects for conservation agreements and other stewardship tools under the Act.

## **List of Participating Organizations**

Alberta Beef Producers  
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers  
Canadian Cattlemen's Association  
Canadian Electricity Association  
Canadian Federation of Agriculture  
Canadian Federation of Outfitter Associations  
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society  
Canadian Wildlife Federation  
Coastal Forest Products Association  
COSEWIC ATK Subcommittee  
County of Forty Mile  
Credit Valley Conservation  
Cypress County  
Earth Rangers  
Forest Products Association of Canada  
Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board  
Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board  
Kivalliq Wildlife Board  
LIFT Philanthropy Partners  
Lower Similkameen Indian Band  
Makivik Corporation  
Nature Conservancy Canada  
Nature Trust of New Brunswick  
Northwest Territories Environment and Natural Resources  
Nova Scotia Nature Trust  
Nunavut Department of Environment, Wildlife Management  
Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated  
Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board

Sahtu Renewable Resources Board

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities

Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association

Sustainable Canada

Vancouver Aquarium

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board