

## **Implementing Critical Habitat Protection under SARA - Agreements and Programs**

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Canada's federal Species at Risk Act represents the beginning of a new era in species at risk protection and recovery in Canada. Within the legislation are embedded a series of habitat conservation requirements and prohibitions to protect species at risk critical habitat on both federal and non-federal lands, including federal protected areas. The legislation contains provisions for implementation of critical habitat protection through the use of existing protection mechanisms where available or through new cooperative agreements - the stewardship approach - where existing remedies are not available. This paper describes the implementation framework for the protection of critical habitat through existing protection mechanisms and new conservation agreements, as specified by the SARA. The paper then discusses challenges and opportunities associated with implementing the critical habitat legislative provisions through both mechanisms with reference to such programs as the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk and the Ecological Gifts Program.