



# Stewardship Network of Ontario

## STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY 2012

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The *State of Ontario's Biodiversity 2010* report (SOBR) showed that Ontarians are placing large demands on the Province's biological resources, with serious consequences not only for biodiversity but also for environmental health, quality of life and economic prosperity. Most of the land in southern Ontario is in private ownership, so stewardship is the single most effective mechanism we have to ensure the future health of our communities and enable long-term sustainable use of our lands and waters. In order to accomplish this, we need to engage the support and active participation of private landowners, communities, industry and businesses. Many Ontarians are already participating in stewardship. For example, the SOBR reports that more than 33,000 Ontario residents volunteered annually for biodiversity conservation projects between 2006 and 2008. The Stewardship Network of Ontario aims to ensure that existing activities can continue and are complemented by engaging more people and supporting increased involvement.

**Our vision is a future where Ontarians care for air, land, water and biodiversity and work together to sustain the natural processes on which all life depends.**

### WHAT IS SNO?

The Stewardship Network of Ontario (SNO) is a collaborative of non-government and government organizations that works to increase the capacity of stewardship agencies to contribute to biodiversity conservation and environmental health. SNO was initiated in 2004 in response to a clear need for improved information sharing, collaboration among stewardship agencies and a stronger voice for stewardship in Ontario. In 2007, SNO was invited to be the Stewardship Working Group of the Ontario Biodiversity Council, recognizing that SNO was in a perfect position to help implement the stewardship objectives of the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy.

SNO hosts an annual forum, publishes a newsletter - SNO Squall, and maintains a website to share information, profile its members and provide updates on current activities and success stories. SNO forms task groups of member organizations to pool talents and resources and work on specific projects. Examples include:

- A survey of provincial/regional organizations regarding stewardship priorities
- A report on community engagement in setting targets and thresholds associated with climate change

- Engagement with governments, agencies, working groups and other partner-based collaboratives to strengthen policies or programs (e.g., the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, Ontario’s Water Taking Permit Process, and Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy)
- Collaboration with Hydro One on mitigation work to offset habitat loss as a result of it’s corridor twinning project
- Participation on the National Stewardship Portal and input to the 2009 Stewardship Road Map for Canada
- Workshop on an Ecological Recovery Plan for Canada at 2010 Latonnell Conservation Symposium
- Project to develop improved indicators of stewardship success and effectiveness

## WHO PARTICIPATES IN SNO?

SNO provides a meeting ground for environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS), government agencies, businesses and industries. It comprises approximately sixty NGOs and other organizations, eleven federal and provincial government agencies, and a dozen local groups. Membership is open to any provincial or regional organization whose activities are aligned with the vision, objectives and actions in this strategy.

SNO’s work is coordinated by a Leadership Committee that currently includes Conservation Ontario, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Eastern Ontario Model Forest, Federation of Ontario Cottagers’ Associations, Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Forestry Association, Ontario Stewardship, Trees Ontario, and Chairperson, Suzanne Barrett.

## PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

This strategy updates and builds upon the Stewardship Strategy published by SNO in October 2007. It is intended to provide guidance to SNO members and the Leadership Committee for the next five years and will be reviewed again in 2017.

The *Ontario Biodiversity Strategy, 2011* (OBS) includes the following targets: “By 2015, the number of Ontarians who participate in biodiversity conservation activities is increased by 25%” and “By 2015, the proportion of private lands that are managed for biodiversity is increased”. This Stewardship Strategy is based on the recognition that a collaborative approach is essential to advance stewardship towards the OBS targets. The strategy guides SNO’s work to facilitate access to information, reduce duplication, address barriers and make the most efficient use of scarce resources. It provides a vision, principles, objectives and strategic actions as a foundation for the annual workplan developed by the SNO Leadership Committee.

## PRINCIPLES

1. Stewardship is based on knowledge and understanding of ecological, social and economic processes
2. Leadership and partnerships among governments, conservation organizations, businesses and community groups are essential to create and sustain an effective framework for stewardship
3. Stewardship is focused on community empowerment and collaborative action and generally requires a long-term commitment at the local scale

4. Public information and training are essential to create awareness, support and capacity for stewardship

## OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate leadership and encourage collaboration among stewardship agencies, governments, academia, community groups, institutions and businesses
2. Increase access to knowledge in support of stewardship
3. Strengthen public policy support for stewardship
4. Strengthen private sector support and involvement in stewardship
5. Promote investment and incentives to increase community capacity and encourage stewardship by individuals and groups
6. Contribute to the implementation of Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy 2011

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

SNO meets its objectives through the following strategic actions. The Leadership Committee develops an annual workplan to focus efforts in specific areas. Key elements of the workplan typically include an annual forum, SNO's website, SNO Squall e-bulletin, and various special projects designed to implement the strategic actions.

*Numbers in parentheses indicate that the strategic action supports a specific key action in Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy, 2011.*

## Leadership and Collaboration

SNO provides a collective voice for stewardship in Ontario. We demonstrate leadership and encourage collaboration through the following strategic actions:

- Bring Stewardship Network members together on a regular basis to share information, celebrate successes and address current issues
- Support and enhance biodiversity stewardship activities and partnerships with local communities and landowners (#11)
- Provide opportunities for all people to become involved in stewardship, with a focus on youth and new Canadians (#12)
- Support the involvement of Aboriginal communities in stewardship (#10)
- Increase the proportion of private lands that is managed for biodiversity and environmental health (#26)
- Promote the development of urban biodiversity and green infrastructure strategies (#27)
- Showcase and promote the services and programs provided by stewardship organizations
- Facilitate community discussions about common visions for the landscape, ecosystem targets and thresholds for sustainability (#22)
- Maintain links and share information with other groups with compatible goals, such as the Ontario Biodiversity Council, Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network and the Canadian Business and Biodiversity Council

## Knowledge

SNO acts as a hub for information about stewardship activities, benefits, and techniques through the following strategic actions:

- Share information and links to stewardship activities and groups, current research, best practices, incentive opportunities, educational materials and success stories in Ontario as well as highlights of work in other jurisdictions
- Promote biodiversity-related social science research (#34)
- Foster community level dialogues that bring together scientific, traditional and local knowledge

## Support

SNO works with all sectors to increase awareness of the contributions of stewardship to environmental health, human well-being and economic prosperity. This contributes to the adoption of a stewardship ethic among individuals, communities, generations and throughout Ontario. Strategic actions include:

- Support the development of common information systems, performance measures and reporting for environmental management, biodiversity conservation and stewardship progress (#19)
- Recognize and celebrate achievement and innovation in biodiversity stewardship (#13)
- Support dialogue among stakeholders on issues of common interest to address barriers and promote policy and program improvements
- Promote the value of stewardship to funding agencies

- Encourage private sector support through funding of stewardship and active participation in stewardship of business and industrial lands

## Investment

SNO uses its collective knowledge about the values of stewardship and its connections with funders and other stakeholders to encourage greater investment. Strategic actions include:

- Investigate and promote existing and new economic tools that encourage biodiversity conservation and environmental health (#9)
- Foster dialogue on the economic value of biodiversity and ecosystem services and ways to integrate them in decision-making (#8)
- Promote sustainable funding mechanisms that support stewardship of biodiversity and environmental health (#32)