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Site Alteration Activities that have Potential to Impact Protected Snakes & their Habitat on Pelee Island

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) encourages landowners to consult our Aylmer District Office for technical information before undertaking site alterations and vegetation clearing on the island, due to the presence of habitat of endangered species and threatened species throughout the island. MNRF is aware that the removal of vegetated hedgerows and shoreline vegetation occur on the island. These are two types of site alteration and vegetation clearing activities that MNRF recommends we are consulted on to ensure that residents do not contravene the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA 2007). MNRF considers habitat of endangered species and threatened species to include vegetated hedgerows and shoreline vegetation for species at risk (SAR) snakes on the island, specifically Eastern Foxsnake (Carolinian population), Blue Racer, and Lake Erie Watersnake.

Eastern Foxsnake, Blue Racer, and Lake Erie Watersnake are all endangered species in Ontario and receive both species and habitat protection under the ESA 2007. There is a habitat regulation in place that defines the regulated habitat for Eastern Foxsnake, while the other two snake species receive general habitat protection. More information about habitat protection under the ESA 2007 is available on MNRF's website, found at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-species-risk-are-protected>.

Vegetated Hedgerows

Vegetated hedgerows are a vital habitat feature on the island for SAR snakes since they function as movement corridors, protective shelters, regulating body temperature, and foraging. There may also be special habitat features within vegetated hedgerows, such as rotting logs or organic piles, which could provide additional habitat needed for snakes to carry out their life processes, such as egg-laying. MNRF does not consider sparse tree lines or wind breaks that do not have ground cover vegetation as habitat for SAR snakes.

Shoreline Vegetation

Shoreline vegetation on the island falls within the municipal road allowance or other municipal lands. MNRF considers both shoreline vegetation and armour stone to be habitat of endangered species and threatened species. Spraying and/or mowing sections of shoreline vegetation to provide access (visually and physically) to the shoreline from cottages across the roadway is known to impact habitat of endangered species and threatened species for SAR snakes.

Please note vegetated hedgerows and shoreline vegetation are subject to protection under the ESA 2007. Habitat of endangered species and threatened species is protected from damage and destruction under the ESA 2007. Therefore the removal of hedgerows or the spraying and/or mowing of shoreline vegetation could be considered a contravention of the ESA 2007.

As in the past, MNRF staff will continue to provide technical support and recommendations for vegetation management that is compatible with the protection of Pelee Island's natural heritage values while allowing the municipality to undertake necessary maintenance to ensure the stability of the armour stone.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, or to contact MNRF prior to proposed site alteration or vegetation clearing, please contact Heather Riddell, District Planner, at 519-773-4757 or by email at heather.riddell@ontario.ca. Alternatively, please contact Aylmer District's general line at 519-773-9241.

**Note: there are other SAR species and habitat on the island and other activities that may cause a contravention of the ESA 2007, however this factsheet is focused on vegetation removal and shoreline spraying / mowing.*

Snake Species at Risk on Pelee Island

The Species at Risk in Ontario (SARO) List is Ontario Regulation 230/08 issued under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA 2007). The ESA 2007 came into force on June 30, 2008, and provides both species protection (section 9) and habitat protection (section 10) to species listed as endangered or threatened on the SARO List. The current SARO List can be found on e-laws (<http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/navigation?file=home&lang=en>).

Eastern Foxsnake (Carolinian Population) – endangered



Habitat protection applies to over-wintering sites and active season habitat features used for snake life processes such as basking, gestation, shelter, foraging, mating, nesting, and movement

Over-wintering sites can include old bridges, culverts, building foundations, old wells, rodent burrows, and rock piles

Active season habitat includes rotting logs or stumps, organic piles, woodchip piles, rock piles, brush piles, dump sites of old agricultural equipment, woodlands, farm hedgerows, old fields, wetlands, and drainage corridors

For more information on Eastern Foxsnake: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/eastern-foxsnake>

Blue Racer – endangered



Habitat protection applies to over-wintering sites and active season habitat features used for snake life processes such as basking, gestation, shelter, foraging, mating, nesting, and movement

Over-wintering sites can include cracks and fissures in limestone and bedrock, building foundations, old brick piles, concrete blocks, rubble piles, and old wells

Active season habitat includes decaying wood and logs, rock piles, organic piles, rock outcrops, vegetation, brush piles, alvars, historical alvars, savannas, woodland edges, and old fields

For more information on Blue Racer: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/blue-racer>

Lake Erie Watersnake – endangered



Habitat protection applies to over-wintering sites and active season habitat features used for snake life processes such as basking, gestation, shelter, foraging, mating, birthing, and movement

Over-wintering sites can include cracks and fissures in bedrock, rock piles, armour stone, rodent burrows, root masses, building foundations, drainage tiles, and old wells

Active season habitat includes limestone / dolomite shelves and ledges, armour stone, vegetation, rock piles, soil piles, brush piles, discarded wooden boards or sheet metal, wetlands, and canals

For more information on Lake Erie Watersnake: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/lake-erie-watersnake>