

Missing Link?

Understanding the Role of Municipalities in Species at Risk Management

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The biggest struggle is that people don't now what to do. It's not only education about the species, but it's also education about what they can do to help the species or what they are doing that's harming the species because people don't even realize that they are doing something that is bad

Habitat loss from development and site alteration threatens the survival of many populations, especially the 572 species listed as extirpated, endangered, threatened and of special concern in Canada. Since municipal planning regulates land use and development, it may be an appropriate conduit to address species at risk issues. The purpose of this study is to understand the current role of municipal governments in managing species at risk through examining the municipalities affected by the expansion of Highway 69. Widening the road may stimulate development in the area, considering that southern Ontario faces challenges with conserving environmentally sensitive areas and fertile farmland. Through reviewing official plans and conducting eleven semi-structured interviews with municipal and provincial staff, the study identifies four major issues with managing species at risk: limited public awareness, incomplete science applied to

policy, minimal resources and a reactive process. These issues limit municipalities' ability to manage species at risk. At the municipal level, species at risk are only considered at the time of development; however, the process does not account for limited data. Improving municipal involvement in managing species at risk requires better data and provincial support, as well as citizens' engagement. Implementing biodiversity principles into municipal planning may prevent species from becoming 'at risk'. Municipalities, as the level of government nearest to the people, may improve protection

and recovery of species at risk through employing a variety of tools that regulate land use and create awareness. Municipal involvement may be one of the missing links in managing species at risk.



A big problem that we have right now is a lot of species at risk are snakes, little slimy creatures, insects, things that people don't care about, so the stewardship thing is fundamental because education is the main key to recovering species.

Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its worth to man, and, to accord other organisms such recognition, man must be guided by a moral code of action.

United Nations' World Charter for Nature (1982, p.1)