



Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

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Grassland Stewardship Program Returns for 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2017

Guelph, ON—Back for its third year, the Grassland Stewardship Program (GSP) will begin accepting applications in early January 2018. The program supports on-farm conservation activities that benefit Bobolink and other grassland birds at risk, and is piloting the use of Conservation Agreements. GSP is delivered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and is funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada as part of their Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) initiative.

The Bobolink is a ground-nesting grassland bird that can be found in hay and pasture fields across Ontario. It has been designated as a species at risk both provincially and federally due to its rapidly declining population. “Farmers’ stewardship actions are critical to the survival of Bobolink, which depends to a great extent on farmland for habitat” said Andréa Dubé-Goss, Environmental Programs Manager at OSCIA. “GSP provides funding to support farmers’ efforts to protect and restore agricultural grassland habitat.”

GSP supports four best management practices that play a key role in maintaining Bobolink and other grassland bird habitat, which includes both tame and native hayfields and pastures. Supported practices include: Control of Encroaching Trees and Shrubs through Mowing, Grassland Restoration, Incorporating Delayed Grazing into Rotational Grazing Systems, and Forage Harvest Management (Delayed Haying).

The SARPAL initiative is piloting the use of Conservation Agreements as a mechanism for supporting species at risk recovery through habitat protection on private agricultural lands. Program participants are required to sign a Conservation Agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Producers who wish to participate can apply online or on paper during two application submission periods:

- Intake 1: January 10 – February 1, 2018
- Intake 2: April 9 – May 1, 2018

Projects must be carried out between January 1 and December 15, 2018. The maximum funding available through GSP is \$20,000 per farm business. For full program details, please visit www.ontariosoilcrop.org/oscia-programs/sarpal/gsp.

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