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## **Watershed Advisory Committee**

# **Supplemental Agenda**

**Date:** March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Time:** 12:00 p.m.

**Location:** SNC Watershed Room  
SNC Office  
38 Victoria Street  
Finch, ON K0C 1K0



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## Watershed Advisory Committee

# Supplemental Agenda

March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 12:00 p.m.

### 1. New Business

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. Request for Approval: Community Environmental Grants Program: Kelsey         | 3-10  |
| b. Update: SNC Forest Annual Report 2024: Pat                                   | 11-21 |
| c. For Discussion: Tree Planting Survival Assessment Summary: Caro/Alex         | 22-24 |
| d. For Discussion: Availability of Committee Documents in French (verbal): John |       |

Ronda Boutz,  
Secretary-Treasurer.

/rb

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**To:** Watershed Advisory Committee  
**From:** Kelsey Smith, Stewardship and Outreach Assistant  
**Date:** March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
**Subject:** Request for Approval: Community Environmental Grants Program

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Communications Committee recommend that the Board of Directors approve amendments to the Community Environmental Grants Program to allow applications for community environmental projects events apply for an amount of up to \$500.

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**DISCUSSION:**

SNC's Community Environmental Grants Program encourages and supports community events across the jurisdiction that promote recreational use of our rivers, protect the environment, or celebrate our natural heritage.

In 2020, the Communications Committee approved temporary program amendments to allow community funding to be directed to community tree planting projects during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Staff recommend amending Program's guidelines to approving up to \$500 per applicant who may be interested in one of the following environmental initiatives in their communities, in partnership with SNC:

**Environmental Education & Outreach**

- Events or initiatives that raise awareness of environmental issues, promote environmental responsibility, or encourage learning through community participation.

**Outdoor Recreation & Stewardship**

- Funding to help plant a native caliper-sized tree, or several potted stock trees or shrubs in a public community space.

**Agri-Environmental Projects**

- Initiatives that promote sustainable agricultural practices or showcase environmental leadership in the farming community.

**Natural Heritage & Cultural History**

- Projects that highlight, celebrate, or preserve the natural or environmental history of the region.



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When applying for the grant categories listed above, applicants may apply for one of two fixed amounts:

- **\$250** – For small-scale projects or events
- **\$500** – For larger or more resource-intensive activities

Visibility requirements will remain unchanged: an SNC banner must be displayed throughout the activity, and SNC's logo must be displayed on promotional products.

SNC staff will provide support to tree planting projects, including providing advice on suitable trees species, planting locations, and recommending available stock.

Program updates will not replace existing grant categories or conditions, the update offers additional funding.

This amendment will allow the program to distribute all the 2025 program funds, help plant native trees in community parks, assist with community gardens and support a variety of safe environmental projects.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/ADHERENCE TO SNC POLICY:**

Compliance with Budget: Funding for Community Environmental Grants is included in the 2025 SNC Budget under Resource Management: Land Stewardship and Outreach: on page 40.

SNC Policy Adherence: Disbursement of Community Environmental Grants is compliant with the purchasing policy – Purchasing Limits/Authorized Buyers – Team Lead's approved limit of up to \$5,000.

*Kelsey Smith*

Kelsey Smith,  
Stewardship and Outreach Assistant

Attachments: Draft Program Guidelines: Community Environmental Grants

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## South Nation Conservation – Community Environmental Grants Application Guidelines – Revised March 2025

South Nation Conservation (SNC) is committed to supporting grassroots projects that foster environmental awareness, community participation, and stewardship of natural resources.

The Community Environmental Grants Program empowers local groups to lead events and initiatives that protect and celebrate the environment across the South Nation Watershed.

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### Grant Amounts

Applicants may apply for one of two fixed amounts:

- **\$250** – For small-scale projects or events
- **\$500** – For larger or more resource-intensive activities

*Note: Applications must be received before the scheduled activity. Funding will not be approved retroactively.*

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### Who Can Apply

This program is open to:

- Non-profit organizations
- Community groups
- Municipalities
- Schools and educational institutions

All applicants must operate within SNC’s jurisdiction in Eastern Ontario, and proposed activities must also take place within the jurisdiction.

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### Eligible Project Categories

#### 1. Environmental Education & Outreach

Events or initiatives that raise awareness of environmental issues, promote environmental responsibility, or encourage learning through community participation.

#### Examples include:

- School workshops or eco-fairs
- Nature talks or demonstrations
- Youth engagement programs
- Environmental art projects or displays





## **2. Outdoor Recreation & Stewardship**

Public activities that promote responsible enjoyment of the natural environment and encourage hands-on conservation action.

### **Examples include:**

- Canoe or kayak excursions
  - Community clean-ups (e.g., parks, trails, rivers)
  - Fishing derbies or shoreline events
  - Outdoor nature activity days
- 

## **3. Agri-Environmental Projects**

Initiatives that promote sustainable agricultural practices or showcase environmental leadership in the farming community.

### **Examples include:**

- Soil health education
  - Pollinator habitat creation
  - Demonstration plots
  - Farm tours with an environmental focus
- 

## **4. Natural Heritage & Cultural History**

Projects that highlight, celebrate, or preserve the natural or environmental history of the region.

### **Examples include:**

- Interpretive signage
  - Heritage walks or tours
  - Displays about local ecosystems or watershed history
- 

## **5. Community Greening Projects (Tree Planting or Gardens)**

Projects that enhance public spaces through native plantings or food-growing initiatives.

### **Examples include:**

- Native tree or shrub plantings
- Pollinator or edible gardens
- Beautification of school or park spaces
- Urban shade or buffer planting projects



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### Requirements:

- Must take place on public or publicly accessible land
  - Applicants must provide: location, landowner permission, and project specifications
  - SNC will support species selection and planting guidance (if needed)
  - Applicants are responsible for watering and maintenance
- 

### How to Apply


Applicants must submit:

- Completed and signed application form
- One-page letter describing:
  - Project or event details, including location and timing
  - Category the project falls under
  - Budget and how SNC funds will be used
  - Any other partners or sources of funding
- Quotes or specifications (if applicable)
- Written permission for use of land (if required)
- A brief promotional plan (if applicable)

Applications must be submitted at least 5 business days before the scheduled activity.

### Submit your application to: South Nation Conservation

Attn: Communications & Outreach Department  
38 Victoria St., P.O. Box 29, Finch, ON K0C 1K0

 1-877-984-2948

 [info@nation.on.ca](mailto:info@nation.on.ca)

 [www.nation.on.ca](http://www.nation.on.ca)



## **General Conditions for Approved Community Environmental Grants**

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### **1. Eligible Applicants and Activities**

- Grants are open to non-profit organizations, community groups, schools, and municipalities located within SNC's jurisdiction.
- The proposed activity must also take place within SNC's jurisdiction.

### **2. Public Health Requirements**

- All activities must comply with the most current public health guidelines in effect at the time of the event.

### **3. First-Come, First-Served**

- Applications will be considered in the order they are received.
- SNC reserves the right to limit funding to one application per category, per applicant.

### **4. Application Requirements**

- Applicants must submit a signed application form and a one-page letter that includes:
  - A description of the activity and its location
  - Contact information
  - How the activity meets one or more grant categories
  - Other sources of funding and how SNC funds will be used
- All materials must be received at least five (5) business days before the scheduled activity.

### **5. Public Participation**

- Projects must include opportunities for public and/or school engagement.

### **6. Promotion and Recognition**

- Activities must be promoted through media such as print, radio, social platforms, or community networks.
- All promotional materials must be approved by SNC before use and must include the SNC logo.
- Copies of all materials must be submitted with the final report.

### **7. SNC Visibility at Events**

- The SNC banner, flag, or roll-up must be prominently displayed during the activity.
- Applicants are responsible for picking up and returning display materials to the SNC office in Finch.





**8. Environmental Responsibility**

- Waste must be disposed of in an environmentally responsible manner (e.g., recycling, composting).

**9. Insurance and Liability**

- It is the responsibility of the Applicants to arrange proper insurance coverage for the activity.
- South Nation River Conservation Authority, as Sponsor of the activity, accepts no liability and/or negligence to the Applicant or third parties, nor is it liable to participants of the activity (and activities related to the project).

**10. Final Reporting Requirements**

- A brief final report must be submitted to SNC within six (6) weeks of the activity.
- Reports must include a summary of results, photos, and copies of media or promotional materials.

**11. Grant Payment**

- Grant cheques will be issued after the activity has taken place and all program conditions have been met to the satisfaction of SNC.

**12. Waiver of Conditions**

- SNC may, at its discretion, waive certain conditions of grant approval.

**13. Ongoing or Permanent Projects**

- For permanent or long-term initiatives, SNC may adjust requirements related to recognition and reporting.





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**Applicant Acknowledgement**

I (We) have read and understand the above conditions and agree to follow them as outlined.

I (We) understand that grant funds will not be issued unless all conditions are met to the satisfaction of South Nation Conservation.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address for Payment:**



**To:** Watershed Advisory Committee  
**From:** Pat Piitz, Team Lead Property  
**Date:** March 24, 2025  
**Subject:** Update: SNC Forest Annual Report 2024

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Forestry Committee receive and file the SNC Forest Annual Report 2021.

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**DISCUSSION:**

The SNC Forest Annual Report summarizes activities that occur within the SNC Forest during the annual operating period January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024.

Highlights of the current Annual Report include:

- An increase in the forest area (four new acquisitions)
- Compliance with operating standards (FSC and SFI)
- Staff training and developments
- Two new certified tree markers
- New silvicultural prescriptions
- New tree marking and harvest areas
- Seeding and tree planting on SNC land Program
- Harvest revenue (awarded contract not ratified)
- Continued forest infrastructure investment

In addition to the certification of the SNC Forest under forest management standards, SNC is applying for FSC Certification for the provision of Ecological Goods & Services (EGS). The annual report includes reporting on projects that enhance or restore EGS when they occur on SNC owned-lands.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/ADHERENCE TO SNC POLICY:**

Compliance with Budget: In compliance with the 2024 SNC Budget: Community Lands: SNC Forest.

SNC Policy Adherence: In compliance with SNC Forest Policy.

Programs and Services Category: Category 1 – Mandatory: Conservation Lands

  
Pat Piitz,  
Team Lead Property.

Attachments: SNC Forest Annual Report 2024

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# SNC FOREST

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

March 2025



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

South Nation Conservation (SNC) owns land including forests and wetlands. These lands are managed in accordance with an approved forest management plan which provides for sustainable timber harvest that generates revenue, improves forest health, provides wildlife habitat, protects natural heritage, and creates recreational opportunities. As of December 31, 2024, the total area of land owned by SNC was 5,208.5 hectares.

This report outlines the administrative and operational activities that have been carried out from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

## 2 FOREST ADMINISTRATION

### 2.1 Forest Accruals and Depletion

Under the Forest Land Acquisition Program, SNC actively seeks to acquire land for forestry purposes and ensure adequate forest cover throughout its jurisdiction. In 2024, four parcels of land were added to the SNC Forest. There were no depletions in 2024. The forest area at the end of the operating period was 4,994.9 hectares. Table 1 provides a summary of changes to the SNC Forest land base.

**Table 1  
South Nation Forest  
Summary of Accruals and Depletions**

Comp.	Municipality	Purpose	Type	Area (ha.)	Value
182	North Dundas	Forest	Donation	10.6	\$367,500
183	North Glengarry	Forest	Donation	21.8	\$305,000
184	Ottawa	Natural Heitage	Fee Simple	39.5	\$1,817,923
185	Ottawa	Forest	Fee Simple	20.1	\$1,331,811
<b>Total Accruals</b>				<b>92.3</b>	<b>\$3,822,234</b>
<b>Total Depletions</b>				<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>

### 2.2 Forest Certification

During the operating period, the SNC Forest maintained Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification under Group Certificate RA-FM/COC-000232 and the SNC Forest also attained Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification under Group Certificate PBN-SFI/FM-038025. The SNC Board of Directors authorized staff to seek Ecological Goods & Services (EGS) certification under the FSC standard. The application for EGS certification is in progress.

#### 2.2.1 Internal Audits

An internal audit was conducted by the Certification Group Manager and the Forest Manager on June 17, 2024. Some irregularities were observed in compliance with harvest operations: marked trees not cut, merchantable timber left on ground, and harvest inspections. The following corrective actions were undertaken. The frequency of harvest inspections were

increased during the commencement of harvest operations and on issuance of a non-compliance order.

The Annual Reporting Form was submitted to the Group Certificate holder (EOMF) on September 24, 2024. The annual report indicated for the period July 1st, 2023 to June 30th, 2024 an annual harvest volume of 717.39 m<sup>3</sup>, 120.97 hectares added to the forest and no area removed from the forest, and a total forest area of 4,492.87 hectares.

The annual report also included the following staff changes and forestry training acquired during the operating period:

### **Current Staff**

Pat Piitz, Team Lead Property, Registered Professional Forester  
Caroline Goulet, Forester, Registered Professional Forester  
Cheyene Brunet, Forest Technician, Associate Professional Forester  
Chris Craig, Senior, Senior Forest Technician  
Alexandre Roy-Guay, Forestry Technician  
Tavish Macleod, Forestry Assistant

### **Forestry Training**

Ontario Pesticide Licence – 2 staff  
Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Workshop– 3 staff  
Ontario Tree Marking Re-Certification – 2 staff  
Ontario Tree Marking Certification – 1 staff

### **2.2.2 Third-Party Audits**

The annual FSC and SFI audits were completed between October 24, 2024 to November 1, 2024 by a team of specialist representing Preferred by Nature. Eight forest management units (FMU) were included in the 2024 audit.

Member-forests are randomly subject to audit following internal monitoring requirements as per the new Group Standard (FSC-STD-30-005V2-0 FM Groups Standard). SNC submitted all documents required for independent annual audits under group certification and was selected for field audit during the 2024 operating period. Non-conformities and observations apply to all group members where applicable.

**FSC:** During the FSC audit, one minor non-conformity and one observation were reported. A non-conformity was reported regarding a current forest management plan for one of the member community forests. This is to be corrected by the forest manager for that FMU.

The Auditor observed that improvements are required to provide verifiable management targets and monitoring in compliance with new standards. The corrective action is to be implemented on new or revised Forest Management Plans.

**SFI:** There were no non-conformance issues or observations identified during the SFI audit. Two opportunities for improvement were identified. A minor water crossing erosion issue (not within SNC Forest) and improvement to fire response provisions within Forest Management. Note: SNC has a separate Forest Fire Emergency Response Plan that is updated annually.

Two best management practices were identified: all members demonstrated good knowledge of Policies & Procedures demonstrating the good communication within the Group. Members also demonstrated excellent community outreach and engagement.

## 2.3 Property Tax Programs

### 2.3.1 Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP)

In 2024, an amendment to the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program was submitted adding recently acquired properties under Plan No. H9816.

Plan No. H9816 was accepted to the MFTIP under Ontario Regulation 282/98 of the Assessment Act on September 10th, 2018.

### 2.3.2 Conservation Lands Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP)

In 2024, twenty compartments within the SNC Forest had areas eligible under the Conservation Lands Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) and voluntarily registered under CLTIP for the 2025 tax year. The total area was 543.98 hectares. These properties are all Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW) and /or Areas of Natural & Scientific Interest – Life Sciences (ALS).

## 2.4 Easements

### 2.4.1 Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT)

The SNC Forest contains 623.04 hectares subject to Heritage Conservation Easement Agreements (HCEA) to the interest of the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT).

Under the terms of the HCEA, the SNC Forest can be subject to a compliance audit by an OHT representative. There were no audits completed in 2024.

### 2.4.2 Utility Easements

Several forest properties are subject to utility easement agreements registered on title. Table 6 provides a list of affected properties. Regular maintenance activities are conducted by the easement holder. The easement holder coordinates these activities with the SNC Forest manager. Forest operations may be restricted by the easement. No new easements were registered during 2024

**Table 2**  
**South Nation Forest**  
**Lands Subject to Utility Easements**

Property No.	Easement Holder	Purpose	Status	Duration
7	Hydro One Networks Inc.	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
29	Hydro One Networks Inc.	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
33	Hydro One Networks Inc.	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
58	Hydro One Networks Inc.	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
63	Hydro One Networks Inc.	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
67	Hydro One Networks Inc.	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
79	Hydro One Networks Inc.	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
140	TransCanada Pipeline	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
145	Hydro One Networks Inc.	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent
145	Trans Canada Pipeline	Utility Corridor	Registered	Permanent



### 3 FOREST MANAGEMENT

#### 3.1 Twenty-Year Forest Management and Five-Year Operational Plan

The Twenty-Year Forest Management Plan was approved by the Board of Directors (BD-119/18) as recommend by the Forest Advisory Committee in March 2018. There were no changes to the Twenty-Year Forest Management Plan in 2024.

The Board of Directors approved a new Five-Year Operational Plan for the period 2024 – 2028 in October 2024 (BD-177/24).

### 4 FOREST OPERATIONS

#### 4.1 Silvicultural Prescriptions

Silvicultural prescriptions were prepared for operational activities on four SNC Forest properties for a gross total area of 142.4 hectares. Silvicultural prescriptions consisted of mainly conifer plantation thinnings. Table 2 summarizes the prescription activities.

**Table 2  
Summary of Silvicultural Prescriptions  
2024**

Compartment	Treatment	Gross Area (Ha.)	Actual Area (Ha.)	Species	Quantity
41/64	Third Thinning	32.7	32.7	Red Pine	2,884.3 m <sup>3</sup>
69	Salvage/Tree Planting	1.74	1.74	Mixed	-
83	Salvage/Tree Planting	0.48	0.48	Red Pine	-
105	Salvage/Tree Planting	4.16	4.16	Mixed	-

#### 4.2 Tree Marking

Tree marking following silvicultural prescriptions were complete on 32.7 hectares of forests during 2024.

**Table 3  
Summary of Tree Marking  
2024**

Working Group	Allowable Harvest Area (ha.)	SNC Forest Compartments (ha.)						Total
		SNC41 /64						
Pr	32.7	32.7						32.7

#### 4.3 Seeding and Tree Planting

A substantial amount of tree planting was undertaken within the SNC Forest during 2024. Table 4 summarizes seeding and tree planting.

**Table 4  
2024 Summary of Seeding and Tree Planting**

Compartment	Treatment	Area (Ha.)	Species	Quantity	Comment
SNC 30	Fall Tree Planting	0.15	White Pine	400	Plugs
SNC 53	Spring Tree Plant		White Pine	9	Potted
			Yellow Birch	8	Potted
			White Birch	8	Potted
			Red Oak	20	Potted
			Tulip Tree	10	Potted
			Eastern Hemlock	5	Potted
			Mountainash	8	Potted
			Swamp White Oak	18	Plug
			Shagbark Hickory	11	Plug
			Buttonbush	80	Plug
			Gray Dogwood	30	Plug
			Black Chokeberry	20	Plug
			Black Chokeberry	60	Potted
Grey Alder	20	Plug			
SNC 53	Seeding	1.50	Riparian Mix	4.43	kg
			Wildflower Mix	5.48	kg
SNC 69	Spring Tree Planting	1.74	White Pine	3,500	Bare Root
SNC 83	Fall Tree Planting	0.48	White Pine	1,500	Plugs
SNC 105	Spring Tree Planting	4.16	White Pine	8,000	Bare Root
			Yellow Birch	500	Bare Root
			Black Maple	200	Bare Root
			Swamp White Oak	50	Bare Root
SNC 180	Spring Tree Planting	3.25	White Spruce	5,050	Bare Root
SNC 184	Seeding	3.16	Meadow Seed Mix	26.19	kg
			Fall Rye/Oats	69.50	kg

**4.4 Special Site Operations (High Conservation Value)**

Both FSC and SFI require annual updates of important ecological features within the certified forests. FSC terminology refers to these features as High Conservation Values (HCV) while SFI refers to these activities as Special Site Operations.

During 2024, two projects were undertaken to improve water management, enhance ecological function and restore wildlife habitat. These activities are summarized in Table 5

**Table 5  
Summary of Special Site Operations/High Conservation Values**

Comp. No.	Type	HCVF Category	Description
SNC53	Wetland Restoration	Category 4	Project consists of several fixed-elevation rip-rap spillways to create a permanent large open wetland (2.08 ha.)
SNC49	Wetland Restoration	Category 4	Creation of multi-pool wetland in existing inundated area of the compartment



**Wetland Restoration SNC 53 Nation Municipality**

#### 4.5 Harvest

Table 5 provides a summary of the completed and pending harvest activities within the SNC Forest.

**Table 5  
Summary of Annual Harvest  
2024**

Harvest Year	Compartment(s)	Species <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	Actual Volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	Harvest Area (ha.)	Value (gross)
2023	SNC 75	Pr	417.1	297.5	9.5	\$4,313.21
		Pw	262.1	214.0		\$1,442.81
		Sw	48.1	34.6		\$518.56
		Fuelwood	-	36.1		\$180.36
2023	SNC 69 <sup>2</sup>	Pr	-	66.7	1.7	\$652.90
		Pw	-	79.7		\$680.90
		Sw	-	49.9		\$381.00
		Biomass	-	377.3		\$4,436.52
2023	SNC 105 <sup>2</sup>	Pr	-	328.8	4.2	\$3,222.20
		Pw	-	58.6		\$500.40
		Sw	-	37.8		\$288.40
		Biomass	-	650.4		\$7,648.20
2024	SNC 83	Pr	-	160.51	0.5	\$3,210.80
		Biomass	-	-		-
2024	SNC 13/23/30	Pr	453.1	-	53.9	-
		Sw	1,172.2	-		-
		Fuelwood	-	-		-
2025	SNC 41/64	Pr	2884.3	-	32.7	-
		Fuelwood	-	-		-
<b>Total</b>						<b>\$27,476.26</b>

#### 5 CAPITAL PROJECTS & FOREST INFRASTRUCTURE

Several infrastructure projects were completed on the SNC Forest in 2024 (Table 6). Culverts and landings were constructed to facilitate thinning operations, salvage operations and

<sup>1</sup> Pw-White Pine; Pr-Red Pine; Sw-White Spruce; Po-Poplar

<sup>2</sup> Derecho Salvage

**Table 6**  
**Summary of Capital Projects & Infrastructure**  
**2024**

Type	Compartment	Quantity	Comments
Landings	SNC75; SNC105; SNC69	3	new
Entrance Culverts (permanent)	SNC53; SNC69; SNC75; SNC105	4	Permit obtained; culvert to be installed 2024
Roads/Trails (winter maintenance)	SNC64	300 m.	Facilitate Operations



**To:** Watershed Advisory Committee  
**From:** Caroline Goulet, Forester  
Alexandre Roy-Guay, Forestry Technician  
**Date:** March 25, 2025  
**Subject:** For Discussion: Tree Planting Survival Assessment Summary

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**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Committee provide feedback on the Tree Planting Survival Assessment Summary report and associated staff recommendations.

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**BACKGROUND:**

South Nation Conservation (SNC) has been a program delivery agent for the Forests Canada: 50 Million Tree Program since 2010. This report outlines several key recommendations for improving the success and survival outcomes of projects. These include:

- Reinstating the first-year assessment
- Potential fee for refills on sites where no tending or maintenance has occurred
- Alternative vegetation control methods
- Offering interrow mowing services
- Stake flags for landowners
- Tree shelters for landowners at a reduced cost

Survival Assessments

Through the Program, survival assessments are required on each project at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> growing season. Until 2020, program guidelines required that assessments be completed in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> growing season.

Staff would like to put forward the recommendation to Forests Canada, with support from the Watershed Advisory Committee to consider reinstating the 1<sup>st</sup> year assessment. The first-year assessment played an important role in the early detection of survival issues. By catching issues early, there may be a better opportunity for refill treatments or corrective actions to boost survival rates and prevent the need for larger, more expensive refill in subsequent years.

Refills

If survival for a project falls below 60%, it may be eligible for refill under the Program. Sites are eligible for one refill treatment within 5 growing seasons of the initial planting. All refill applications are reviewed by Forests Canada and approved refill funding is based on the annual available budget.



Since 2012, on average, SNC refills 6.5 sites per year which equates to approximately 9,500 trees. Refill plantings are not guaranteed, SNC staff have discretion on recommending sites for consideration. At present, there is no cost to the landowner for the refill service. Staff are seeking feedback from the Committee on whether a fee should be introduced in 2026 for sites where the landowner has not made a reasonable effort to maintain or protect the trees which includes not clearing competing vegetation for extended periods of time or fencing the site from livestock grazing. SNC typically approves the annual fee schedule for trees in June to have pricing available for sites visits for the following spring tree plant.

#### Use of Herbicides for Site Preparation and Tending

In recent years, staff have observed a growing trend among landowners who are increasingly averse to the use of herbicides on their properties. While herbicide application is the best tool for vegetation control and promoting tree survival, SNC recognizes the need to adapt to the preferences and concerns of landowners. To address this, staff will conduct a thorough review of alternative equipment and products that can be used for vegetation control such as mowers, targeted non-chemical herbicides, and cover cropping as potential solutions to address landowner concerns while still promoting tree survival.

#### Post-Plant Tending and Maintenance Service

Follow up tending is one of the greatest factors in seedling survival but some landowners enrolled in the Program do not have the equipment or capabilities to perform follow-up tending and maintenance. Staff recommend offering interrow mowing services on a cost recovery basis which would directly affect survival rates. This is a service that staff could provide using SNC's ATV and tow behind mower. Due to frequent mechanical issues with the current equipment, a new mower may be required to effectively provide this service.

Stake flags could be provided to landowners free of charge, or on a cost recovery basis to help mark tree rows for interrow mowing and to assist staff during survival assessments when tending did not take place. Currently, stake flags are sold in bundles of 1,000, which exceeds the needs of most landowners.

#### Sale of Tree Shelters

Tree shelters offer benefits to hardwoods including enhanced growth, protection against animals, mechanical damage and herbicides. There are limited sources of tree shelters in Ontario, and they can be expensive (between \$ 3.75-\$ 5.00 each) which presents logistical challenges for landowners. Once the Woodlot Storm Recovery program concludes, the tree shelters used could be provided to landowners at a discounted rate, or staff could facilitate bulk purchases on behalf of landowners to secure better prices.



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Staff will provide a PowerPoint summary of the tree survival assessment summary at the meeting.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/ADHERENCE TO SNC POLICY:**

Compliance with Budget: The Tree Planting Program is included in the 2025 SNC Budget under Resource Management: Landowner Stewardship and Outreach on pages 14-15.

SNC Policy Adherence: Purchases for the Program adhere to SNC's Purchasing Policy.

Programs and Services Category: Category 3 – Watershed (Other) Programs: Private Landowner Stewardship

Caroline Goulet,  
Forester.

FOR:   
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