**The Aboriginal Fund For Species at Risk (AFSAR) – Aquatic Programming**

**Now Accepting Proposals for 2025 to 2026**

The Government of Canada is transforming its approach to species at risk conservation and recovery by shifting to ecosystem-based, multispecies initiatives. This approach includes providing funding towards the protection and recovery of aquatic and terrestrial species at risk. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is responsible for aquatic species at risk and supports stewardship of these species through various programs, including the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (AFSAR).

Established in 2004, the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (AFSAR) program facilitates active participation by Indigenous[[1]](#footnote-1) communities in the implementation of the Species at Risk Act (SARA). It invests in organizational capacity, encourages activities that conserve and/or recover species at risk (SAR), and supports community-led documentation and management of Indigenous Knowledge[[2]](#footnote-2) (IK).

In 2025 to 2026, there will be two separate platforms for funding, Indigenous Partnerships for Species at Risk (IPSAR) and the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk, (AFSAR):

* **Terrestrial Projects (IPSAR)** – Delivered by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC);
* **Aquatic Projects** **(AFSAR)** – Delivered by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

The Call for Proposals outlined here applies only to **aquatic** species at risk projects. For information on funding for terrestrial species at risk, please [contact Environment and Climate Change Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/programs/indigenous-partnerships-species-risk.html).

**AFSAR PROGRAM OBJECTIVES – AQUATIC PROGRAMMING**

The objectives of the AFSAR aquatic program are to:

* Promote the conservation and recovery of aquatic SAR and their habitats;
* Support the engagement and participation of Indigenous Peoples in SAR stewardship and SARA implementation.

**AFSAR EXPECTED RESULTS – AQUATIC PROGRAMMING**

In order to be considered for funding, proposed projects should demonstrate how they align with the objectives of the AFSAR program. Further, the proposal should describe, through its own objectives, activities and anticipated outcomes, how it will achieve one or more of the following results:

* Habitat for species at risk is improved and/or managed to meet their recovery needs;
* Threats to species at risk and/or their habitat are stopped, removed and/or mitigated;
* Collaboration, information sharing and partnership between Indigenous communities, governments and organizations and other interested parties (e.g. federal / provincial / territorial governments, academia, industry, private sector) is enhanced; and
* Capacity within Indigenous communities, to lead in the stewardship of species at risk and contribute to broader SARA implementation, is strengthened.

**AFSAR NATIONAL AQUATIC PRIORITIES**

The national priorities for the AFSAR aquatic program are projects or activities that focus on the following:

* Implementation of priority activities described in federal recovery strategies, action plans or management plans;
* Implementation of multi-species and multi-partner projects within important habitat areas[[3]](#footnote-3);
* Activities that seek to monitor, mitigate or respond to threats described in federal SAR recovery documents and species assessments (COSEWIC);
* Community-led capacity development[[4]](#footnote-4), including the documentation and management of Indigenous Knowledge (IK).

***NOTE:*** *For information on specific Regional priorities, please see the AFSAR Aquatic Program Guidelines.*

**GENERAL ELIGIBILITIES – AFSAR AQUATIC PROGRAMMING**

Project activities may take place in freshwater and marine areas across Canada, including those within federal lands, Indigenous lands, provincial Crown lands or private lands.

Indigenous communities and organizations located in Canada are eligible for funding. A partner organization (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) may submit an application on behalf of one or more Indigenous communities or organizations IF the organization provides a letter of support from the community indicating that it has been formally mandated to do.

Proposals targeting species identified as ‘Endangered’, ‘Threatened’ or of ‘Special Concern’ will be eligible for funding under the AFSAR. This applies to species listed on Schedule 1 of SARA, as well as unlisted species that have received a corresponding status assessment from the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

***NOTE:*** *For more detailed information on program eligibilities and the aquatic species statuses, please see the AFSAR Aquatic Program Guidelines.*

**TIMELINES**

The program will be**accepting Expressions of Interest (EOI) until November 8, 2024.**

***NOTE:*** *Though not mandatory, it is strongly recommended that applicants submit an EOI prior to submitting the full application. Doing so will allow for early contact with DFO’s Regional Coordinators and facilitate feedback on application and/or proposal development prior to evaluation.*

**Completed application forms will be accepted until 11:59 (PST) on December 13, 2024.**

**For more information:**

* Please refer to the [AFSAR Aquatic Program Guidelines](http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/sara-lep/afsar-faep/proposal-proposition/instructions/index-eng.html) for more detailed information on national and regional priorities and program eligibilities for aquatic project proposals.
* General information on the AFSAR program is also available on the [AFSAR website](http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/sara-lep/afsar-faep/index-eng.html).
* Both the [Expression of Interest](http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/sara-lep/afsar-faep/proposal-proposition/eoi-di/index-eng.html) and the [Application Form](http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/sara-lep/afsar-faep/proposal-proposition/application/index-eng.html) are available as fillable forms.
* Please contact your [AFSAR Regional Coordinator](http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/sara-lep/afsar-faep/contact-contactez/index-eng.html) to receive additional information on the AFSAR program or assistance related to the development and/or submission of your proposal.

**Thank you for your interest in the stewardship and conservation of species at risk. We wish you the best in your application!**

1. *The term “Indigenous” replaces “Aboriginal” in certain instances as it is all-encompassing with respect to Indigenous Peoples. The term “Aboriginal” is used with respect to specific reference to the program’s name or to specific wording in Acts, such as the Species at Risk Act.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Indigenous Knowledge (IK) refers to holistic approaches to understanding that may draw on past and current knowledge structures. It encompasses what is often referred to as ‘Traditional Knowledge’, but is not limited to that term and may involve the application of modern technologies.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *The program defines “important habitat” as Critical Habitat, habitat that is considered as candidate for Critical Habitat, or habitat that is important for the species survival (e.g. spawning, rearing areas, overwintering areas, migratory corridors) but that is not actually identified in a recovery strategy/action plan/management plan.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Capacity development is a general term that includes (but may not be limited to) SAR related: training and professional/skills development; local employment through project activities; investments in technical resources, equipment and capital assets; community or public outreach and education; community-led documentation and management of Indigenous Knowledge (IK).* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)