

# Small Whorled Pogonia

## Ontario Government Response Statement



Photo: Allen Woodliffe

### PROTECTING AND RECOVERING SPECIES AT RISK IN ONTARIO

Species at risk recovery is a key part of protecting Ontario's biodiversity. Biodiversity – the variety of life on Earth – provides us with clean air and water, food, fibre, medicine and other resources that we need to survive.

The *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA) is the Government of Ontario's legislative commitment to protecting and recovering species at risk and their habitats. As soon as a species is listed as extirpated, endangered or threatened under the ESA, it is automatically protected from harm or harassment. Also, immediately upon listing, the habitats of endangered and threatened species are protected from damage or destruction.

Under the ESA, the Ministry of Natural Resources (the Ministry) must ensure that a recovery strategy is prepared for each species that is listed as endangered or threatened. A recovery strategy provides science-based advice to government on what is required to achieve recovery of a species.

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE STATEMENTS

Within nine months after a recovery strategy is prepared, the ESA requires the Ministry to publish a statement summarizing the government's intended actions and priorities in response to the recovery strategy. The recovery strategy for the Small Whorled Pogonia was completed on February 18, 2011 ([http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/2ColumnSubPage/STDPROD\\_075654.html](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/2ColumnSubPage/STDPROD_075654.html)).

The response statement is the government's policy response to the scientific advice provided in the recovery strategy. In addition to the strategy, input on the response statement was requested from stakeholders, other jurisdictions, Aboriginal communities and members of the public. The statement reflects the best available traditional, local and scientific knowledge at this time and may be adapted if new information becomes available. In implementing the actions in the response statement, the ESA allows the Ministry to determine what is feasible, taking into account social and economic factors.

The Small Whorled Pogonia is a small orchid which grows in acidic soils in damp mixed woods. Five to six leaves form a single "whorl" at the top of the stem. The leaves may be overtopped by one or two flowers which are yellowish-green in colour. Like many orchids, the Small Whorled Pogonia obtains some of its nutrients through soil fungi.

## MOVING FORWARD TO PROTECT AND RECOVER SMALL WHORLED POGONIA

The Small Whorled Pogonia is listed as an endangered species under the ESA, which protects both the orchid and its habitat. The ESA prohibits harm or harassment of the species and damage or destruction of its habitat without authorization. Such authorization would require that conditions established by the Ministry be met.

In Canada, the species has been found at only one location in southwestern Ontario, in the Calton Swamp of Elgin County. This property is owned by the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority. The last recorded sighting of the Small Whorled Pogonia was in 1998. As the species can remain dormant for many years (some researchers suggest as many as 20 years), it is not known whether it still exists in Calton Swamp. Two known threats to the Small Whorled Pogonia are habitat degradation and trampling.

**The government's goal for the recovery of the Small Whorled Pogonia is to maintain the persistence of Ontario's only population.**

Protecting and recovering species at risk is a shared responsibility. No single agency or organization has the knowledge, authority or financial resources to protect and recover all of Ontario's species at risk. Successful recovery requires inter-governmental co-operation and the involvement of many individuals, organizations and communities.

In developing the government response statement, the Ministry considered what actions are feasible for the government to lead directly and what actions are feasible for the government to support its conservation partners to undertake.

### GOVERNMENT-LED ACTIONS

To help protect and recover the Small Whorled Pogonia, the government will directly undertake the following actions:

- Educate other agencies and authorities involved in planning and environmental assessment processes on the protection requirements under the ESA.
- Encourage the submission of Small Whorled Pogonia observation data to the Ministry's central repository at the Natural Heritage Information Centre.
- Undertake communications and outreach to increase public awareness of species at risk in Ontario.
- Protect the Small Whorled Pogonia and its habitat through the ESA.

- Support conservation, agency, municipal and industry partners to undertake activities to protect and recover the Small Whorled Pogonia. Support will be provided through funding, agreements, permits (including conditions) and advisory services.
- Establish and communicate annual priority actions for government support in order to encourage collaboration and reduce duplication of efforts.

### GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED ACTIONS

The government endorses the following actions for the protection and recovery of the Small Whorled Pogonia. Actions identified as “high” will be given priority consideration for funding or for authorizations under the ESA. The government will focus its support on these high-priority actions over the next five years.

<b>Focus Area:</b>	<b>Inventory and Monitoring</b>
<b>Objective:</b>	Confirm existence of Small Whorled Pogonia in the Calton Swamp area and determine its extent and abundance.
	<b>Actions:</b>
	1. <b>(HIGH)</b> Conduct surveys in the Calton Swamp to confirm the presence of Small Whorled Pogonia and if found, document information about each occurrence and monitor the plants. Surveys must be carried out over a number of years, given dormancy periods to determine if the species is still present.
<b>Focus Area:</b>	<b>Protection and Management</b>
<b>Objective:</b>	Increase available habitat for Small Whorled Pogonia.
	<b>Actions:</b>
	2. Identify and implement strategies to increase habitat in the areas surrounding the known population.
<b>Focus Area:</b>	<b>Awareness</b>
<b>Objective:</b>	Increase awareness to promote the protection of Small Whorled Pogonia.
	<b>Actions:</b>
	3. Provide information and education to orchid enthusiasts and others regarding the risk to Small Whorled Pogonia from inadvertent trampling.

## IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

Financial support for the implementation of actions may be available through the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund, Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program, Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program or Conservation Lands Tax Incentive Program. Conservation partners are encouraged to discuss project proposals related to the actions in this response statement with the Ministry. The Ministry can also advise if any authorizations under the ESA may be required to undertake the project.

Implementation of the actions may be subject to changing priorities across the multitude of species at risk, available resources and the capacity of partners to undertake recovery activities. Where appropriate, the implementation of actions for multiple species will be co-ordinated across government response statements.

## REVIEWING PROGRESS

The ESA requires the Ministry to conduct a review of progress towards protecting and recovering a species not later than five years from the publication of this response statement. The review will help identify if adjustments are needed to achieve the protection and recovery of the Small Whorled Pogonia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank all those who participated in the development of the "Recovery Strategy for the Small Whorled Pogonia" for their dedication to protecting and recovering species at risk.

### **For additional information:**

Visit the species at risk website at  
[ontario.ca/speciesatrisk](http://ontario.ca/speciesatrisk)  
Contact your MNR district office  
Contact the Natural Resources Information Centre  
1-800-667-1940  
TTY 1-866-686-6072  
[mnr.nric.mnr@ontario.ca](mailto:mnr.nric.mnr@ontario.ca)  
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