



SYDENHAM

PHOSPHORUS REDUCTION INITIATIVE

Program Guidelines

2026

Initiative by |  *St. Clair
conservation*

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Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative

Potential Projects Summary

2026

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) is offering technical and financial assistance* to reduce phosphorus losses and soil erosion and protect water quality on your farm. This table provides potential grant rates and grant maximums for water quality and habitat improvement projects throughout the Sydenham River Watershed.

Potential Projects	Grant Rate	Maximum Grant
Cover Crop Incentive	\$20/ac (single) \$25/ac (min. 3)	\$10,500
Restoring Natural Cover, Windbreaks & Riparian Buffers/Filter Strips	–	100% of project subtotal
Wetland Restoration	–	100% of project subtotal
Erosion Control Structures	75% of a project	\$15,000
Livestock Restriction from Watercourses	\$18/m**	–
Alternative Watering Systems for Livestock	Up to 100%***	\$5,000
Phosphorus Application Equipment and/or Modifications	50% Cost-Share	\$20,000
Reduced Tillage Equipment and/or Modifications	50% Cost-Share	\$20,000
4R Nutrient Management Services	\$10/ac	\$2,500
Alternative Phosphorus Applications	\$10/ac	\$4,000

*Financial assistance conditional on SCRCA securing external funding, funder requirements, SCRCA project approval, and the landowner having met all conditions of the agreement. For more information see www.sydenhamriver.on.ca/stewardship/healthy-watersheds-program/spri/

**Fencing must be permanently installed

***In conjunction with a fencing project

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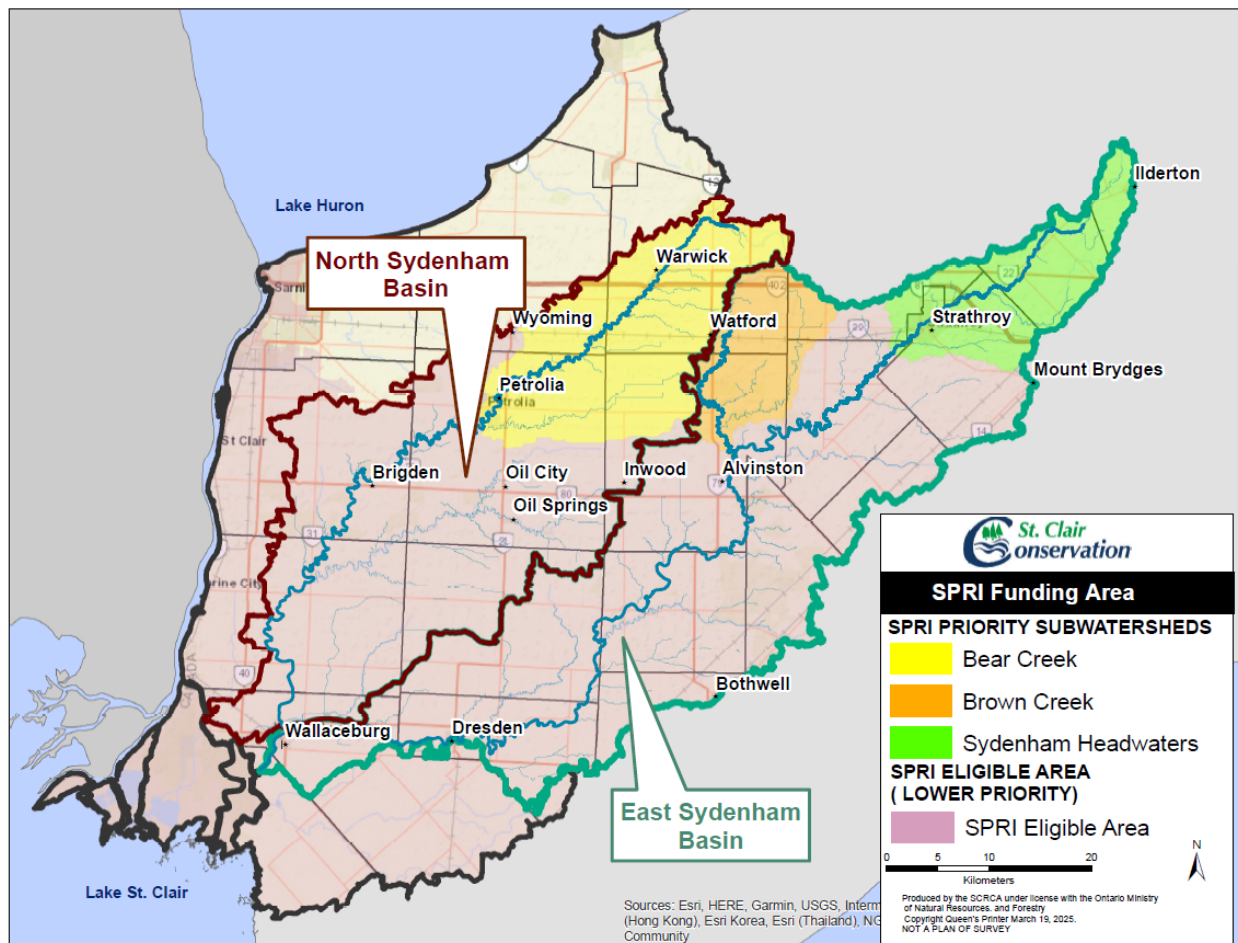
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Geographical Location Eligibility

Incentives are available to landowners within the St. Clair watershed with priority given to those in the Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative subwatersheds of **Bear Creek Headwaters, Brown Creek, and the Sydenham Headwaters** (see map below).

While priority will be given to projects in these subwatersheds, eligible projects located within the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority that are Lake Erie-draining (see SPRI eligible area in map below), show a reduction of phosphorus loss and soil erosion, and benefit fish and wildlife habitat will also be considered.



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Healthy Watersheds Program Guidelines:

To qualify for funding, the following criteria must be met:

- All projects must demonstrate a reduction in phosphorus losses and soil erosion. Projects must also contribute to an improvement to local surface water and/or groundwater quality and/or result in an increase in natural area cover
- The landowner must complete a *Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative* application form for the desired project(s).
- The landowner must demonstrate good land stewardship practices.
- The landowner must contribute financially to the project as indicated in the Landowner Agreement.
- All other sources of funding for a project must be disclosed, and total grant dollars cannot exceed the cost of the project.

How to Apply for Grants

1. Obtain specific program information from the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) *Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative* website <https://www.sydenhamriver.on.ca/stewardship/healthy-watersheds-program/spri/>
2. Thoroughly read through these guidelines to determine if your proposed project qualifies for funding.
3. Complete a *Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative* application form for the desired project(s). Fillable forms can be found at the website above.
4. For land-based projects (e.g. wetland restoration, tree planting), a site visit with SCRCA staff will be necessary to determine eligibility. The project will be reviewed by the SCRCA Stewardship Committee for final approval prior to project implementation. Upon project completion, a final site visit will be conducted.
5. For equipment purchases and/or modifications, specific documentation and procedures must be followed and are outlined below. Projects will be reviewed by an external Agricultural Advisory Committee in addition to SCRCA Stewardship staff.

Important information

Written Approvals

Do not start your project until you have written approval from SCRCA. The eligible start date commences once the Landowner Agreement has been signed by the landowner. Eligible costs can only be incurred, invoiced and/or paid by the applicant once the agreement has been signed by both parties. Projects initiated prior to written approval are not eligible for the grant program with the exception of certain agricultural activities that may have already occurred or are in progress as of April 1st, 2026 (e.g. planting cover crops and crop nutrient planning).



Permits

Projects in and along waterways and ditches may need approval by municipalities, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, or the Conservation Authority prior to implementation. Any work done in/near municipal drains also requires prior approval from the local municipality. The applicant is responsible for acquiring all necessary approvals.

Consent and sharing of information

By submitting an application, you consent to allowing St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) to collect, manage, and share the project cost, project coordinates, and crop management data associated with the project. The data collected by SCRCA will be shared with government partners and university researchers to assist with tracking the industry's progress towards addressing the watershed environmental challenges and program goals. Personal data including name, home address, and contact information will not be shared externally. Any data shared publicly will be in aggregate form and no business or personal identities will be shared with other organizations or agencies. SCRCA is committed to keeping the personal information of applicants confidential, secure, and private.

An example of how data maybe aggregated and shared publicly: 25 producers in the Brown Creek subwatershed planted over 3,000 acres in cover crops this fall.



Alternative Phosphorus Application Practices

Utilizing alternative phosphorus application practices ensures good placement close to the seed where it can be used efficiently by the growing crop and minimizes losses to the environment.

Landowners performing strip tillage phosphorus applications, variable rate phosphorus applications and below canopy phosphorus applications may be eligible for funding.

Application Intake:	Application Deadline:
April 1, 2026	December 1, 2026
Opening Time:	Closing Time:
10:00 AM	4:00 PM
Supporting Document(s) Deadline:	
December 31, 2026	
Note: If supporting documents are not submitted by the deadline, the application/grant funding will be forfeited.	

Grant Rate:	Grant Maximum:
\$10/acre	\$4,000 (400 acres)

Note: Grant maximums will be at the discretion of SCRCA and are subject to change.

Alternative Phosphorus Application Guidelines:

- Project and related fields must be located within the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority boundaries and Lake-Erie draining, with priority given to those in the subwatersheds of Bear Creek Headwaters, Brown Creek, and the Sydenham Headwaters.
- Applicant must be able to demonstrate a Variable Rate Application of Phosphorus (VRA), banding of dry phosphorus at planting, subsurface phosphorus application through a strip-till unit or manure injection and provide application timing details.
- Priority will be given to applicants that can provide an approved nutrient management plan written by a Certified Professional Agronomist or a Certified Crop Advisor.
- Applicant is responsible for submitting field boundary maps with field names, acreages, lots/cons, and GPS coordinates. Failure to provide accurate field information at the time of application may result in funding being withheld/denied. Maps may be obtained from SCRCA Regulations, Google Maps, John Deere tractor maps, your CCA/agronomist or any software that is easiest for you.
- Invoices are required to have the applicant's name, field name(s), and the acreages that are associated with each phosphorus product.
- **Only one pass per field of any application practice within the Alternative Phosphorus Application Practices is eligible for funding.** For example, applicants are not eligible for



two passes of Banding of Dry Phosphorus on the same acres, even if the passes are done at different times of year.

- **Applicants are eligible to apply for funding for more than one Alternative Phosphorus Application Practices subcategory if applications are on different acres.** For example, a single Farm Business Number may be eligible for both Banding of Dry Phosphorus at Planting *and* VRA with Mapping application practices if the practices are done on different acres.
- **Note:** If the project is being implemented on rented farmland, the applicant may be required to provide the landowner's name, email address, and phone number.

Eligible Project Costs:

- **Variable Rate Application of Phosphorus (applied in field after April 1, 2026)**
 - "Variable Rate Application of Phosphorus" refers to the application of phosphorus fertilizer using Variable Rate Technology in combination with information provided by soil testing.
 - Applicant must provide PDF documentation of soil sample points and soil test results from the last three years (i.e. 2023 and newer), field boundary maps with field names, acreages, lots/cons and GPS coordinates, and VRA maps.
 - Soil sample report(s) must be from an accredited laboratory and completed within the last three years.
 - If custom applied, applicant must provide a dated invoice marked "paid".
 - If phosphorus is applied by the applicant, a photo of equipment in the field on the day of application is required.
- **Banding of Dry Phosphorus at Planting (applied in field after April 1, 2026)**
 - "Banding of Dry Phosphorus at Planting" includes banding prior to seeding, side/below-banding (2x2"), deep banding (>2"), and seed placement at planting. "Banding" does not refer to strip tillage application in this context (see "Subsurface Application of Phosphorus Through Strip Tillage").
 - Applicant must provide documentation of field boundary maps with field names, acreages, lots/cons, and GPS coordinates.
 - Applicant must provide a copy of a dated fertilizer invoice with fertilizer analysis. Invoices are required to have the applicant's name, field name(s), and the acreages that are associated with each phosphorus product.
 - If custom applied, applicant must provide a dated invoice marked "paid" and a photo of the fertilizer unit in the field on the day of application.
 - If phosphorus is applied by the applicant, the applicant must provide a photo of fertilizer unit in the field on the day of application.
- **Subsurface Application of Phosphorus through Strip-till (applied in field after April 1, 2026)**
 - "Strip till" refers to application of phosphorus fertilizer using strip tillage equipment.



- Applicant must provide documentation of field boundary maps with field names, acreages, lots/cons, and GPS coordinates.
 - Applicant must provide a copy of a dated fertilizer invoice with analysis. Invoices are required to have the applicant's name, field name(s), and the acreages that are associated with each phosphorus product.
 - If custom applied, applicant must provide a dated invoice marked "paid" and a photo of the fertilizer unit in the field on the day of application.
 - If phosphorus is applied by the applicant, the applicant must provide a photo of fertilizer unit in the field on the day of application.
- **Manure Injection (applied in field after April 1, 2026)**
 - Applicant must provide documentation of field boundary maps with field names, acreages, lots/cons, and GPS coordinates.
 - Applicant must provide a copy of the laboratory analysis (dated within the last year).
 - If manure is custom injected, applicant must provide a dated invoice marked "paid" and a photo of the manure injection equipment in use in the field on the day of application.
 - If manure is injected by the applicant, the applicant must provide a photo of unit in use in the field on the day of application.
 - Invoices are required to have the applicant's name, field name(s) and the acreages that are associated with each phosphorus product.

Ineligible Project Costs (expenses not covered by a grant):

- Multiple passes of the same or different Alternative Phosphorus Application Practices (i.e., BMP subcategories) on the same field.
- Application of non-phosphorus fertilizer(s), lime, or other nutrients
- Purchase of lift kit without purchase of components that will directly improve in field fertilizer application
- Purchase or modification that will solely or mainly enhance nitrogen application or incorporation (i.e. Conceal planter attachment for nitrogen placement)
- Phosphorus fertilizer in any form
- Purchase of drones
- Spinner style or broadcast fertilizer spreaders, equipment to move manure from storage to field (e.g. tankers, box spreaders, drag hoses, pit agitators, hose reels and any other equipment that is not a tool bar), separate pass cultivation unit or incorporation equipment, upgrades to tractors and combines, and spray equipment)
- Annual service fees of any type
- GPS components related solely to a guidance system (e.g., autosteer systems, RTK, section/swath control)
- Maintenance costs and/or warranties for equipment or components
- Transportation costs of exported or imported manure from or to the farm
- Equipment that facilitates the movement of manure to the spreading unit



- Invoices and/or proof of payment not issued in the applicant's name
- In-kind contributions of labour and farm equipment
- Materials or products produced by the applicant's farm business
- Typical farm equipment (e.g. tractors, skid steers, combines, grain carts) and related accessories or attachments
- Extended warranties, taxes, legal fees, financing charges, loan interest payments, bank fees

NOTE: Projects that do not adhere to the program guidelines listed above will not be eligible for funding.



Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **Can an applicant apply for more than one category within the Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative?**
 - Yes. A single applicant/Farm Business Number may apply for multiple BMP categories. See question 3 for annual funding caps.
2. **Is funding stackable with other cost-share programs?**
 - Yes. However, cost-share programs administered by other organizations may have stipulations on stacking funding. Please refer to their respective guidelines for their stacking limitations. With exception of the cover crop incentive, grant maximums **for projects that are eligible for stacking with other sources** will be at the discretion of SCRCA and are subject to change. If you have been awarded funding for cover crops from another cost-share program, SCRCA will only provide the difference up to our respective grant rates of \$20/acre and \$25/acre. For example, if you are receiving \$15/acre from another cost-share program for a single species, SCRCA will provide you with \$5/acre to meet our grant rate of \$20/acre.
3. **Is there a cap on funding per farm business?**
 - Yes. A single farm business (as defined by a Farm Business Number) may be eligible for up to \$50,000 annually, if they are successful in multiple BMP categories.
 - There is a cap of \$40,000 per farm business number over the four-year program for BOTH the *Phosphorus Application Equipment Modifications and/or Purchases* AND the *Reduced Tillage Equipment Modifications and/or Purchases* categories combined. Any successful project under each of these categories will also contribute to the annual \$50,000 cap per farm business.
4. **Can I apply if I am outside of the priority subwatersheds of Bear Creek Headwaters, Brown Creek and the Sydenham Headwaters?**
 - Yes. However, priority will be given to landowners residing in these subwatersheds. While priority will be given to projects in these subwatersheds, eligible projects located within the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and are Lake Erie-draining (see SPRI eligible area in map on page 3), show a reduction of phosphorus loss and soil erosion, and benefit fish and wildlife habitat will also be considered.
5. **I have questions about filling out the application form, who should I contact?**
 - Please contact the SCRCA Stewardship Team below. Please note that Jeff Sharp should only be contacted for potential tree planting projects.



Meet the SCRCA SPRI Team!

Jessica Van Zwol

Healthy Watershed Coordinator

jvanzwol@scrca.on.ca

(519) 245-3710 ext. 241

Project Lead for: General Inquiries, Wetland Restoration, Erosion Control, Reduced Tillage Equipment & Modifications, and Phosphorus Application Equipment & Modifications

Lisa McNeill

Agricultural Stewardship Technician

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Project Lead for: Cover Crops, Reduced Tillage Equipment & Modifications, and Phosphorus Application Equipment & Modifications

Kailey Michnal

Agricultural Stewardship Technician

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Project Lead for: Livestock Restriction from Watercourses, Alternative Watering Sources, 4R Nutrient Management Services, Alternative Phosphorus Applications, and Riparian Buffers

Jeff Sharp (trees only)

Manager of Conservation Services

jsharp@scrca.on.ca

(519) 245-3710 ext. 217

Project Lead for: Windbreaks, and Tree Planting

