



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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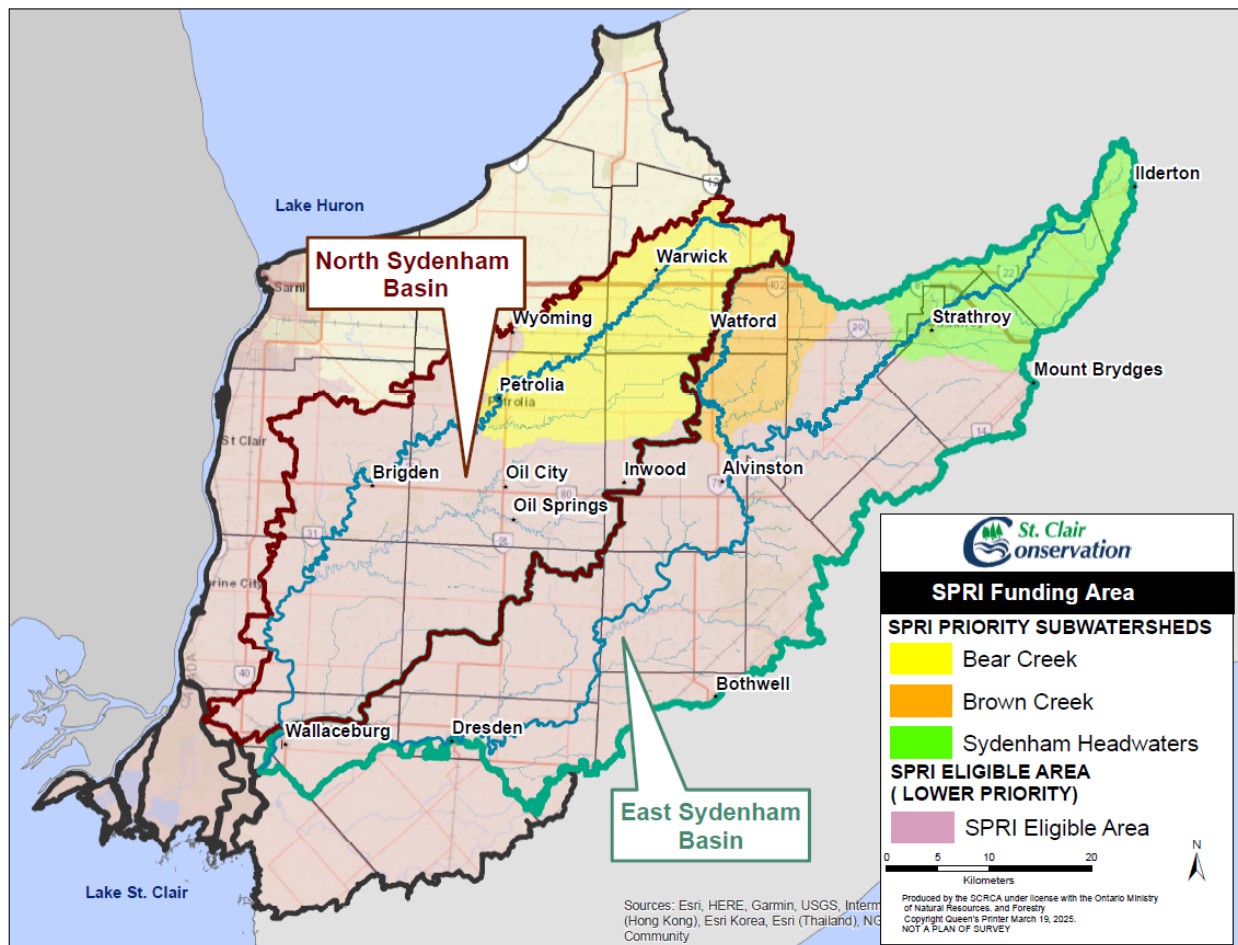
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Geographical Location Eligibility

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.



Reduced Tillage & Residue Cover Equipment Modifications and/or Purchases

Reduced tillage (conservation/mulch/minimum tillage/strip-tillage) is an alternative method to conventional systems that allows for at least 30% of the soil surface to be covered with crop residue. Reduced tillage systems aid in limiting soil and wind erosion and help to maintain water quality. When transitioning to a reduced tillage system, tillage and planting equipment may need to be modified and/or purchased. To be considered for funding, the applicant must be able to demonstrate that newly purchased equipment and/or modifications to existing equipment show a notable reduction in tillage. Upgrading to a newer model of equipment for an existing reduced tillage practice will be considered an ineligible expense.

Application Intake:	Application Deadline:
April 1, 2026	April 13, 2026
Opening Time:	Closing Time:
10:00 AM	12:00 PM
Supporting Document(s) Deadline:	
December 1, 2026	
Note: If supporting documents are not submitted by the deadline, the application/grant funding will be forfeited.	

Grant Rate:	Grant Maximum:
50% cost-share of project sub-total	\$20,000

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

Reduced Tillage Equipment Modifications and/or Purchases 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.
- Project must demonstrate a notable reduction in tillage (i.e. transitioning from conventional tillage to a new practice of no-till, strip-till, or minimum tillage, OR transitioning from strip-till or minimum tillage to a new practice of no-till)
- New practice must leave a minimum of 30% of soil surface covered with living or dead residue after planting
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide all documentation within the intake window. Applications submitted between April 1 and April 13, 2026, without a dated quote will be considered incomplete until receipt of a quote. **Quotes must not be any older than March 1, 2026.**
- Equipment purchases and modifications invoiced must be dated after **April 1, 2026.**
- Applicant will be required to provide dated invoices marked paid and pictures of equipment at the time of use by **December 1, 2026**

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- Applicant is subject to a SCRCA staff site visit to verify equipment purchases and or/modifications
- Application will be reviewed by at least two of the following: SCRCA Stewardship staff, the SCRCA Stewardship Committee, and the external SCRCA Agricultural Advisory Committee.
- **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:

The following equipment/modifications are eligible **ONLY** if they are in conjunction with a practice change in reduced tillage

- **Tillage Equipment:** Strip-till unit, chisel plow unit and/ or sweeps, points, shovels and shanks, deep banding tips
 - Vertical tillage will only be considered as follows:
 - i. If true vertical tillage equipment is purchased (e.g. Great Plains true vertical till equipment or Salford vertical till unit),
 - ii. Mechanisms are in place to permanently prevent disc angles at more than 2%,
 - iii. OR only in conjunction with ONE tillage pass (preferably spring, NOT fall)
 - iv. OR if used in conjunction with seeding cover crops
- **Planting Equipment:** No-till drill, no-till planter, air seeder with fertilizer capability, ground opener, coulters, row cleaners, press wheels, cover crop seeder
- **Used Equipment:** Used equipment must be in good working order, less than 5 years old, and needs to be purchased at arm's length (i.e. cannot be purchased from a family member). An invoice will be required for all equipment purchases and/or modifications.

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

- Applications that seek to upgrade or purchase newer models of equipment for an existing reduced tillage practice
- Applications that seek to replace worn out/broken/dented components of existing reduced tillage equipment
- Practices that do not result in reduced soil disturbance with a minimum of 30% of the soil surface covered with previous crop residue after seeding of the subsequent crop (ex. high speed discs)
- Purchase of drones
- Spinner style or broadcast fertilizer spreaders; equipment to move manure from storage to field (ex. 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, 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
- Equipment that does not result in injection applications of manure (e.g., vertical beaters, weigh scales)
- Irrigation and/or fertigation equipment
- Any equipment or equipment customizations that do not support an increase in soil health or a decrease in nutrient loss
- 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

lmcneill@scrca.on.ca

(519) 245-3710 ext. 125

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

Kailey Michnal

Agricultural Stewardship Technician

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(519) 245-3710 ext. 126

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

