

# Recovery Strategy for the American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) in Canada

## American Ginseng



2015



**Recommended citation:**

Environment Canada. 2015. Recovery Strategy for the American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) in Canada [Proposed]. *Species at Risk Act Recovery Strategy Series*. Environment Canada, Ottawa. v + 29 pp.

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Également disponible en français sous le titre  
« Programme de rétablissement du ginseng à cinq folioles (*Panax quinquefolius*) au Canada [Proposition] »

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ISBN

Catalogue no.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.sararegistry.gc.ca/default\\_e.cfm](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/default_e.cfm)

## Preface

The federal, provincial, and territorial government signatories under the [Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk \(1996\)](#)<sup>2</sup> agreed to establish complementary legislation and programs that provide for effective protection of species at risk throughout Canada. Under the *Species at Risk Act* (S.C. 2002, c.29) (SARA), the federal competent ministers are responsible for the preparation of recovery strategies for listed Extirpated, Endangered, and Threatened species and are required to report on progress within five years after the publication of the final document on the SAR Public Registry.

The Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency is the competent minister under SARA for the recovery of American Ginseng and have prepared this strategy, as per section 37 of SARA. To the extent possible, it has been prepared in cooperation with the Governments of Ontario (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry) and Quebec (Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les Changements Climatiques) as per section 39(1) of SARA.

Success in the recovery of this species depends on the commitment and cooperation of many different constituencies that will be involved in implementing the directions set out in this strategy and will not be achieved by Environment Canada and the Parks Canada Agency, or any other jurisdiction alone. All Canadians are invited to join in supporting and implementing this strategy for the benefit of American Ginseng and Canadian society as a whole.

This recovery strategy will be followed by one or more action plans that will provide information on recovery measures to be taken by Environment Canada and the Parks Canada Agency and other jurisdictions and/or organizations involved in the conservation of the species. Implementation of this strategy is subject to appropriations, priorities, and budgetary constraints of the participating jurisdictions and organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.sararegistry.gc.ca/approach/strategy/default\\_e.cfm](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/approach/strategy/default_e.cfm)

## Acknowledgments

This recovery strategy was developed by Vincent Carignan and Alain Branchaud (Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service [EC-CWS] – Quebec region) based on a draft by Andrée Nault (Montreal Biodome) and in collaboration with:

EC-CWS – Ontario region: Angela McConnell, Lee Voisin, Marie Archambault, Krista Holmes and Madeline Austen.

EC-CWS – Quebec region: Karine Picard, Geneviève Langlois and Matthew Wild.

EC-CWS – National Capital region: Paul Johanson and Manon Dubé.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) : Jay Fitzsimmons, Eric Snyder, Aileen Wheeldon, Shaun Thompson, Roxanne St. Martin, Tom Crosswell, Dr. Brian Naylor, Jim Saunders, Daryl Coulson, Corina Brdar, Ron Gould, Amanda Fracz, Vivian Brownell and Jim Mackenzie.

Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les Changements Climatiques (MDDELCC) : Patricia Désilets, Évelyne Barrette, Guy Jolicoeur, Line Couillard and Vincent Piché.

Parks Canada Agency (PCA): Vicki Leck, Beth McEachern, Josh Van Wieren, Hillary Knack, Leonardo Cabrera and Gary Allen.

The following people also commented on the document or provided information to improve its content: Caroline Tanguay (Nature Conservancy Canada), Robert Werbiski and other Department of National Defence personnel; Jean-François Dubois, Jacinthe Bélec and Lonny Cooté (EC - Wildlife Enforcement Directorate); Adrienne Sinclair and Andrea White (EC-CWS– CITES), as well as Marie-José Ribeyron (consultant), Don Cuddy and Marjorie Mercure<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Formerly with EC-CWS – Quebec region

## Executive Summary

American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) is a long-lived perennial plant associated with mature forests. The species was designated as Endangered by the Committee for the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in 2000 and has been listed with the same status under Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) since 2003.

Less than 1% of the global population of American Ginseng occurs in Canada. Although there is a consensus that the species is severely declining, imprecisions relating to the number of extant populations as well as the absence of abundance data for many of them precludes population trend analyses.

The main threats to the American Ginseng are illegal root harvest, deforestation (industrial, urban and agricultural expansion); browsing, predation and diseases (mortality); introduced and invasive species; forest harvesting; commercial cultivation; as well as climate change. Small population size, a long time to reach maturity and climatic constraints are considered limiting factors.

There are unknowns regarding the feasibility of recovery of the American Ginseng. Nevertheless, in keeping with the precautionary principle, a recovery strategy has been prepared as per section 41(1) of SARA as would be done when recovery is determined to be feasible.

The population and distribution objectives for the American Ginseng in Canada are:

- Over the short-term (2015-2025): Maintain or increase the abundance of American Ginseng plants and the area of occupied suitable habitats at each extant site ;
- Over the long-term (2015-2035): Ensure the viability of all extant occurrences and, where technically and biologically feasible, restore historical or extirpated occurrences.

Broad recovery strategies and approaches to achieve these objectives are presented in the Strategic Direction for Recovery section.

Critical habitat for the American Ginseng is partially identified in this recovery strategy. It corresponds to the areas of suitable habitats within a 150 m critical function zone around each American Ginseng plant. A total of 2,590 critical habitat units containing 7,921 ha within the critical habitat zone are identified in Canada, including 334 in Ontario (3,635 ha) and 2,256 in Quebec (4,286 ha). Due to the sensitivities of the species (e.g., to illegal harvest), the Minister of the Environment, on the advice of COSEWIC, has restricted the release of information that relates to the location of American Ginseng or its habitat (SARA s. 124). A schedule of studies outlines key activities to complete the identification of critical habitat.

One or more action plans will be posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry before the end of 2020.

## Recovery Feasibility Summary

Based on the following four criteria that Environment Canada uses to establish the feasibility of recovery, there are unknowns regarding the feasibility of recovery of the American Ginseng. Therefore, in keeping with the precautionary principle, this recovery strategy has been prepared as per section 41(1) of SARA as would be done when recovery is determined to be feasible. This recovery strategy addresses the unknowns surrounding the feasibility of recovery.

### **1. Individuals of the wildlife species that are capable of reproduction are available now or in the foreseeable future to sustain the population or improve its abundance.**

Yes. Mature individuals remain in many parts of the species' range, including within viable populations. However, the species is rare or uncommon, even in the United States where it is more widely distributed. Accordingly, a rescue effect from populations in the United States is considered to have a low probability. *Ex situ* individuals grown from seeds could be used to increase depleted populations or for reintroduction purposes.

### **2. Sufficient suitable habitat is available to support the species or could be made available through habitat management or restoration.**

Yes. Mature forests with suitable attributes exist throughout the range and populations of American Ginseng have been newly discovered within those habitats in recent surveys. Forest management as well as restoration will likely be necessary for many American Ginseng populations that are in a depleted state.

### **3. The primary threats to the species or its habitat (including threats outside Canada) can be avoided or mitigated.**

Unknown. Most of the threats (e.g., deforestation, plant and seed mortality) can be mitigated through stewardship efforts and adaptive forest management. Mitigating illegal harvest will likely remain the main challenge and will require close collaboration between the various stakeholders to efficiently enforce existing laws and regulations.

### **4. Recovery techniques exist to achieve the population and distribution objectives or can be expected to be developed within a reasonable timeframe.**

Unknown. A high level of effort will be required to fully recover this species because it is unlikely that the main threats will ever be completely eliminated. It is anticipated that active management and law enforcement measures will always be required to counteract illegal harvest of wild roots and to counteract the constant pressure for development and forest harvesting in natural habitats. However, recovery efforts could be supported with relatively simple and low cost techniques such as supplemental seeding and transplantation.

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## 1. COSEWIC\* Species Assessment Information

**Date of Assessment:** May 2000

**Common Name:** American Ginseng

**Scientific Name:** *Panax quinquefolius*

**COSEWIC Status:** Endangered

**Reason for Designation:** In spite of restrictions on international trade, high rates of collection continue and there have been significant losses of populations over the last decade.

**Canadian Occurrence:** Ontario and Quebec

**COSEWIC Status History:** Designated Threatened in April 1988. Status re-examined and designated Endangered in April 1999. Status re-examined and confirmed in May 2000.

\* COSEWIC: Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. An updated status report has been drafted but has yet to be published (COSEWIC 2011- unpublished).

## 2. Species Status Information

Less than 1% of the global population of American Ginseng is found in Canada. In 2003, the species was listed as Endangered in Schedule 1 of the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) (S.C. 2002, ch. 29). In Ontario, American Ginseng has been listed as Endangered under the provincial *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (S.O. 2007, ch. 6) since 2008. In Quebec, the species has been listed as Threatened<sup>4</sup> under the *Act Respecting Threatened or Vulnerable Species* (R.S.Q., ch. E-12.01) since 2001. Both acts prohibit the harvesting, possession and export of wild American Ginseng.

NatureServe (2014) attributed a global status of G3G4 (vulnerable/apparently secure – last reviewed in 2005) to the American Ginseng and a national status of N2N3 (imperiled/vulnerable – last reviewed in 2011) in Canada and N3N4 (vulnerable/apparently secure) in the United States. The species has a status of S2 (imperiled) in Quebec and Ontario<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The status of Endangered (Ontario) and Threatened (Quebec) are similar and refer to a species facing imminent extinction or extirpation.

<sup>5</sup> Consult <http://explorer.natureserve.org/servlet/NatureServe?searchName=Panax+quinquefolius> for subnational (State) statutes in the United States.

American Ginseng has also been included in Appendix II<sup>6</sup> of the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species* (CITES) since 1973. In Canada, the *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* (S.C. 1992, c. 52) and the *Wild Animal and Plant Trade Regulations* implement CITES by regulating American Ginseng import and export.

### 3. Species Information

#### 3.1 Species Description

*The content of this section has been simplified in order to limit the release of sensitive information.*

White (1988) describes the American Ginseng as a shade-tolerant, forest perennial herb. Individuals have an elongated taproot<sup>7</sup> bearing a thin rhizome and an aerial stem ending in a whorl of palmately-compound leaves (one to four - rarely up to seven). They can live for over 50 years (A. Nault, personal communication) and reach a height of 20 to 70 cm<sup>8</sup>. The inflorescence is located at the tip of the stem, centered between the compound leaves, and may have multiple flowers.

#### 3.2 Population and Distribution

American Ginseng is restricted to North America where it occurs over a large portion of the eastern United States, from New England and Minnesota south to Louisiana and Georgia (Argus and White 1984; Figure 1). In Canada, it occurs in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. It is considered to be rare or uncommon in most of its range (White 1988; Nault 1998; McGraw et al. 2003).

The abundance of the American Ginseng in Canadian populations is estimated to be between 50 000 and 100 000 plants<sup>9</sup>. This would represent less than 1% relatively to the “many millions if not billions” of individuals in North America (NatureServe 2014). In Ontario, the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC, 2014) reports 287 occurrences, including 89 historical (the most recent observation dates back 20 years or more) and 38 considered extirpated<sup>10</sup>. No abundance estimate is available for this province. In Quebec, the Centre de données sur le patrimoine naturel du Québec (CDPNQ 2014) reports over 35 000 American Ginseng plants distributed in 168 occurrences, including

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<sup>6</sup> Appendix II includes species that, although currently not threatened with extinction (globally), may become so without trade controls. It also includes species that resemble other listed species and need to be regulated in order to effectively control the trade in those other listed species.

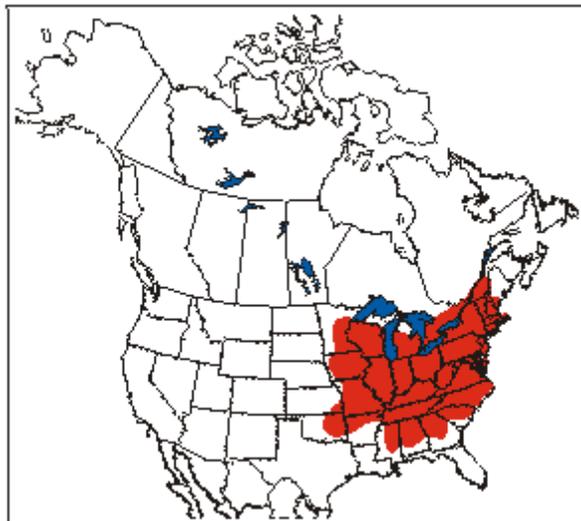
<sup>7</sup> Taproot: an enlarged, somewhat straight to tapering plant root that grows vertically downward. It forms a center from which other roots sprout laterally.

<sup>8</sup> The vigour of individuals can be somewhat depauperate in parts of Ontario, some reaching only 10 cm in height (C. Brdar, unpublished data).

<sup>9</sup> This estimate is based on doubling the known figure of 35 000 plants in Quebec.

<sup>10</sup> These figures were provided in April, 2014 by the NHIC. Occurrence numbers are likely to be higher than 287 due to new data that is regularly received, but that has not been fully evaluated by the NHIC at the time of writing the recovery strategy. EC-CWS used information from the NHIC and other available data sources to inform the critical habitat identification and elaborate recovery strategies and approaches.

14 historical and 11 extirpated. Because abundance estimates are not available for most extant occurrences in Ontario, population trends are not currently available. However, American Ginseng specialists in Canada report severe declines in most areas.



**Figure 1.** Global distribution of the American Ginseng (Argus and White 1984)

Minimum viable population sizes have been proposed in North America. In Ontario and Quebec, Nantel et al. (1996)<sup>11</sup> found that viable populations contain at least 172 individuals, show good annual recruitment (seeds survive to produce the next generation) and have a good proportion of mature plants (i.e. at least 100 plants with 3 or 4 leaves). Using this threshold, only 9 populations in Ontario and 54 in Quebec would be considered viable (CDPNQ 2014, NHIC 2014). However, in central Appalachia (United States), viable populations were estimated to have more than 55 plants (Souther 2011) or 780 to 820 plants or more (McGraw and Furedi 2005). The impacts of threats such as browsing may explain these vastly different figures and suggest that no single threshold in population viability may exist for American Ginseng.

### 3.3 Needs of the American Ginseng

*The content of this section has been simplified in order to limit the release of sensitive information.*

The American Ginseng is a shade-tolerant species that typically requires large and relatively undisturbed mature forests for optimal growth conditions (Charron and Gagnon 1991, Nault et al. 1998). As such, it is considered sensitive to edge effects<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Given the typically wide confidence intervals of extinction probabilities used in mathematical models, P. Nantel suggests that the minimum viable population could be anywhere between 50 and 300 plants (personal communication).

<sup>12</sup> Edge effects refer to the changes in population or community structures that occur at the boundary of two habitats (Levine 2009).

which have been shown to influence the structure and composition of mature eastern North American forests up to approximately 90 m<sup>13</sup> (Harper et al. 2005). In particular, changes to light levels (and associated soil temperatures) near edges can affect American Ginseng plants as the species is physiologically adapted to low light conditions (10 to 30%; Proctor 1980, Westerveld 2010). Above these levels, plants show signs of leaf chlorosis (yellowing of leaf tissue due to a lack of chlorophyll), early senescence, and depressed growth (Gagnon 1999; Jochum et al. 2007).

The canopy of forests occupied by the American Ginseng is usually composed of Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), Basswood (*Tilia americana*), Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) and Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), although some occurrences are found in forests or even swamps with a substantial component of White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) and Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) (Parks Canada Agency, personal communication). Typically, shrubs are sparse, but understory plants are diverse (White 1988; Burkhart 2013).

American Ginseng grow on thick (50-100 cm), well drained soils of glacial origin that have a relatively neutral pH (6.5-7.5)(White 1988; Couillard et al. 2012).

There are two known pollinators for the American Ginseng, halictid bees and syrphid flies, both of which are generalists (Duke 1980). Once the seeds are produced, their dispersal mainly depends on gravity (Lewis and Zenger 1982; van der Voort 2005) but birds, and in particular thrushes, appear to play an important role in dispersing seeds over a longer distance (Hruska et al. in press).

### Limiting Factors

Limiting factors influence a species' survival and reproduction, and play a major role in the capacity to attain certain population levels (rebound following population declines). For the American Ginseng, they include:

- Long period before plants reach maturity and can produce seeds (7-10 years ; White 1988).
- In northern populations, seed production is usually lower (Charron and Gagnon 1991) and germination requires that they remain dormant for a period of at least 18 months (Lewis and Zenger 1982).
- Seedling mortality, namely through drought and predation, is high and can reach 70-90% (Charron and Gagnon 1991, Nault 1998). Seed mortality also reduces the natural recruitment potential of American Ginseng.
- In small populations, rates of self-fertilization may be higher, which produces offspring with lower fitness than in populations with high rates of cross-fertilization (Mooney and McGraw 2007b).
- Allee effect (i.e., problems associated with being in small isolated populations; Hackney and McGraw 2001).

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<sup>13</sup> This figure was obtained for hard edges (contrasting adjacent habitats).

- Most bird species of the Thrush family that play a role in longer distance seed dispersal have been in decline since the late 1960's, with the Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) recently assessed as Threatened by COSEWIC (2012).

## 4. Threats

### 4.1 Threat Assessment

**Table 1. Threat Assessment Table**

Threat	Level of Concern <sup>a</sup>	Extent	Occurrence	Frequency	Severity <sup>b</sup>	Causal Certainty <sup>c</sup>
<b>Utilization of biological resources</b>						
Illegal root harvest	High	Widespread	Current	Recurrent	High	High
Commercial cultivation of American Ginseng	Medium	Localized	Current	Recurrent	Unknown	Unknown
<b>Changes in ecological dynamics or natural processes</b>						
Browsing, predation and diseases (mortality)	High	Widespread	Current	Seasonal	High	Moderate/High
Introduced and invasive species	High	Unknown	Current	Recurrent	Moderate/High	Moderate/High
<b>Habitat loss and degradation</b>						
Deforestation (industrial, urban and agricultural expansion)	High	Widespread	Current	Recurrent	Moderate/High	High
Forest harvesting	Medium/High	Widespread	Current	Recurrent	Moderate/High	Moderate/ High
<b>Climate and natural disasters</b>						
Climate change	Low	Localized	Anticipated	Unknown	Medium	Medium

<sup>a</sup> *Level of Concern: signifies that managing the threat is of (high, medium or low) concern for the recovery of the species, consistent with the population and distribution objectives. This criterion considers the assessment of all the information in the table.*

<sup>b</sup> *Severity: reflects the population-level effect (high: very large population-level effect, moderate, low, unknown).*

<sup>c</sup> *Causal certainty: reflects the degree of evidence that is known for the threat (high: available evidence strongly links the threat to stresses on population viability; medium: there is a correlation between the threat and population viability e.g. expert opinion; low: the threat is assumed or plausible).*

## 4.2 Description of Threats

The threats described below are presented in order of decreasing level of concern.

### Illegal Root Harvest

The medicinal value of Ginseng roots, including American Ginseng, has been recognised in Asia for more than 2000 years (Small et al. 1994). Despite the bans on harvest, possession and export of wild American Ginseng from Quebec (2001), Ontario (2008) and from all federal lands (via SARA; 2003), COSEWIC (2011 – unpublished report) suggest that more than 50% of surveyed populations in Ontario and 15% of populations in Quebec, including many located in protected areas (see Nault et al. 1998, 2002), show signs of illegal harvest.

Although all illegal harvesting is detrimental to the species through reduced abundance, reproductive potential, genetic diversity and viability (Nault and Tanguay 2011), some practices are more destructive than others. Size of harvested plants and the timing of the harvest season (allowing individuals to produce their seeds) are the two main aspects that determine the impact and lasting effects (McGraw and Ferudi 2005; van der Voort and McGraw 2006; McGraw et al. 2010). There is evidence that American Ginseng plants are smaller than they used to be (McGraw 2001). This may be the result of artificial selection imposed by harvest targeting the biggest plants, leading to reduced fitness of remaining plants as well as reduced seed production within wild populations (Charron and Gagnon 1991; McGraw 2001; Cruse-Sanders and Hamrick 2004; Mooney and McGraw 2007a, 2009). Although American Ginseng can re-grow after harvest if its roots and rhizomes are still present, this takes a very long time (van der Voort et al. 2003). Furthermore, because the American Ginseng is slow to reach maturity, a 5% annual root harvest is sufficient to bring a viable population to the brink of extirpation (Nantel et al. 1996; McGraw et al. 2013).

### Deforestation (Industrial, Urban and Agricultural Expansion)

American Ginseng occurs in the southern parts of Ontario and Quebec where industrial (e.g., resource extraction, energy transportation), urban and agricultural activities have resulted in high levels of habitat loss and continue to put pressure on the mature forests that remain in the landscape. Although agricultural expansion appears to have stabilized over much of the American Ginseng range, and even receded in areas on lower quality soils (e.g., Jobin et al. 2014), urban development has accelerated to the point where it is now considered the leading cause of deforestation in North America (Radeloff et al. 2005; Masek et al. 2011), and a major contributing factor in Canada (Elliott 1998; Jobin et al. 2014).

Exploitation of energy sources (e.g., oil, gas) and minerals (including aggregates) and their transportation (e.g., pipelines, transmission lines, roads) continue to generate

habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation throughout the American Ginseng range (Drummond and Loveland 2010; Masek et al. 2011).

Aside from habitat loss, recreational facilities and infrastructures (e.g., trails for hiking and all-terrain vehicles, ski slopes, golf courses) lead to habitat degradation (e.g., soil erosion and compaction, fragmentation, vectors for invasive species, edge effects such as increased density of adjacent vegetation that attracts browsing White-tailed Deer). They have also been found to substantially increase the likelihood of illegal harvest - harvesters have been found to utilize trail networks for species scouting and harvest activities and related harvest impacts have been found to be heavier along trails in provincial nature reserves compared to less-accessible off-trail populations (Young et al. 2011).

#### Browsing, predation and diseases (mortality)

In Canada and the United States, browsing by White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) has been documented to cause major impacts on American Ginseng population survival, namely through reduced plant vigour (browsed leaves and flowers are not replaced during the growing season) and significantly reduced seed production (Brdar 2003; Furedi and McGraw 2004; McGraw and Furedi 2005; McGraw et al. 2013; Nault 2013). Prohibitions on hunting in many protected areas have led to deer populations that are unsustainable relative to plant conservation efforts (Nugent et al. 2011). Forest harvesting activities also result in higher deer densities through an increase in understory vegetation used for browsing (Côté et al. 2004). Although the American Ginseng has the capacity to recover from browsing, repeated browsing can lead to substantial changes to the forest understory vegetation which may prove to be difficult or impossible to reverse (Stromayer and Warren 1997).

American Ginseng fruits and seeds are also eaten by small rodents, as empty shells are often found at the base of plants (Nault and Tanguay 2011; McGraw et al. 2013). The overall impact of these predators on the species remains to be clarified but has been shown to be important in many populations in Quebec where the entire annual seed production was removed (A. Nault, personal communication).

Root and foliage diseases caused by fungal pathogens naturally found in the plants' environment are also common (Westerveld 2010).

#### Introduced and Invasive Species

Invasive species represent one of the five main causes of declines in biodiversity (Millenium Ecosystem Assessment 2005). Invasive slugs (e.g., *Arion rufus*, *A. fasciatus*, *A. fuscus*) are increasingly being found at American Ginseng occurrences across North America and they pose the greatest threat to individual plants by feeding on them as they emerge early in spring (Nadeau 2002; Westerveld 2010; McGraw et al. 2013; Nault 2013, 2014; Marineau et al. 2014). Plants that are affected at this early stage are unable to produce leaves or seeds during the growing season and can't accumulate

energy within their roots, therefore declining in fitness and decreasing survivorship. Invasive earthworms are also a growing concern due to their capacity to change the forest floor (Addison 2009), and facilitate invasion by exotic plants (Nuzzo et al. 2009).

Invasive plant species (e.g., Multiflora Rose *Rosa multiflora*, Japanese Barberry *Berberis thunbergii*, Garlic Mustard *Alliaria petiolata*, European Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*; Dog-strangling Vine *Cynanchum rossicum*) are also problematic because they are fierce competitors for resources but also because they can produce chemicals that harm other plants directly (Wixted and McGraw 2009, 2010; Klionsky et al. 2011). They invade after logging or other disturbances (construction, quarry, recreational use, etc.) within or adjacent to occupied forests and quickly become the dominant species, changing the habitat suitability for American Ginseng.

The progression of the Emerald Ash Borer (*Agilus planipennis*), an invasive insect that attacks ashes, and of the Butternut canker (*Sirococcus clavigignenti-juglandacearum*), an introduced fungus that attacks the Butternut, could represent a significant factor in forests where these species represent an important component. As trees die and the canopy becomes more open, growing conditions may become unsuitable for the American Ginseng because of greater light penetration and increased competition from shrubs and herbaceous vegetation.

### Forest Harvesting

American Ginseng is considered to be intolerant to larger openings in the canopy (McConnell and Bjorgan 2004; Couillard et al. 2012). As such, forest harvesting activities where higher volumes of timber are extracted (e.g., clear-cutting, strip-cutting) directly impact the ecological parameters of a site through increased light penetration at the ground level (opening of the canopy), reduced soil moisture, higher daily temperature fluctuations of the forest floor and increased competition from tree saplings, seedlings as well as shrubs and herbs (White 1988; Nault et al. 1998). Machinery can also create soil erosion and compaction, as well as uproot or crush individuals. In more remote areas, the construction of access roads could facilitate access to poachers.

Harvesting activities where low volumes of timber are extracted to promote the growth of shade-tolerant species may be compatible with the maintenance of American Ginseng (Chamberlain et al. 2013; McGraw et al. 2013). However, forest stands exploited for maple-syrup production may lead to an oversimplification of the vegetation structure and composition, particularly in the shrub and ground layers.

### Commercial Cultivation of American Ginseng

The commercial cultivation of American Ginseng (in woodlots or in agricultural fields) is a growing industry in Canada, with an increase of 4.7% in exportations over the 2007-2011 period<sup>14</sup> (AAFC 2011). Woodland cultivation can affect wild American Ginseng populations through disturbances associated with site preparation (understory

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<sup>14</sup> [www.marquecanadabrand.agr.gc.ca/fact-fiche/pdf/5270-eng.pdf](http://www.marquecanadabrand.agr.gc.ca/fact-fiche/pdf/5270-eng.pdf)

clearing) and maintenance (i.e. fertilizers and fungicides), the introduction of pathogens (Reeleder and Fisher 1995) and the introduction of foreign genes by planting seeds from unknown sources (Nault 1998; Grubbs and Case 2004; McGraw et al. 2013). The effects of this threat have received little attention (but see Mooney and McGraw 2007b), particularly in northern populations where individuals may have adaptations for colder weather and other environmental variables (see Souther and McGraw 2011a).

### Climate Change

Effects of climate change include the increase in the number of severe weather events (e.g., cold snaps, hurricanes, wind storms; Huber and Gullett 2011; Kirtman et al. 2013) that have been shown to impact American Ginseng individuals and populations over multiple years (Souther and McGraw 2011b; Souther and McGraw 2014), including long-lasting effects when habitat components are affected. In the eastern Ontario and Quebec portion of the American Ginseng range, a severe ice storm in January of 1998 caused major damage to the forest canopy that has been compared to those observed following heavy selective logging (COSEWIC 2000). Following that event, the third largest population in Quebec (more than 1000 individuals) was reduced to around 300 individuals.

## **5. Population And Distribution Objectives**

The population and distribution objectives for the American Ginseng in Canada are:

- Over the short-term (2015-2025): Maintain or increase the abundance of American Ginseng plants and the area of occupied suitable habitats at each extant site <sup>15</sup>.
- Over the long-term (2015-2035): Ensure the viability of all extant occurrences and, where technically and biologically feasible, restore historical or extirpated occurrences.

These objectives address the species' long-term decline, which was the reason for its designation as Endangered (COSEWIC 2000). The 10-year time frame for the short term objectives corresponds to the period between successive COSEWIC assessments of a species' status and is considered reasonable given the challenge working on a high number of extant sites. As for the long term objectives, ensuring that all occurrences have viable, self-sustaining, populations is necessary given the intense pressure affecting the species and its habitats. At the moment, it is not possible to quantify the viability threshold as it likely differs in the various parts of the distribution according to local threats and their intensity.

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<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of the present recovery strategy, a site corresponds to any known location that is incorporated or not as an occurrence within a Conservation Data Centre. The term "extant" refers to the presence of at least one American Ginseng plant.

These objectives may be reviewed during the development of the report required five years after this strategy is posted to assess the implementation of the strategy and the progress towards meeting its objectives (SARA s. 46).

## 6. Broad Strategies and General Approaches to Meet Objectives

### 6.1 Actions Already Completed or Currently Underway

- Many occurrences found in protected areas (provincial, federal, private) or on sites where important American Ginseng populations occur are being managed to ensure their viability (e.g., conservation plans; Nault et al. 2002; Nault 2013, 2014) through partnerships between private landowners, conservation organizations (e.g., Appalachian Corridor, Nature Conservancy Canada) and federal partners.
- Enforcement efforts to protect populations from illegal harvest, including dye-marking roots to increase traceability and reduce marketability within the illegal trade network; training of enforcement officers (provincial and federal) for search, seizure and investigation techniques to combat illegal harvesting of wild Ginseng.

#### In Quebec

- A recovery implementation group has been created by the Government of Quebec.
- the Government of Quebec drafted a conservation plan (*Plan de conservation du ginseng à cinq folioles*; Désilets et al. unpublished) that seeks to protect all extant occurrences with a quality rank of Excellent (A) or Good (B); to protect at least one occurrence in each of the physiographic regions (~1000 km<sup>2</sup> units)<sup>16</sup> currently occupied by the species; to protect at least one occurrence in each habitat type occupied; and reintroduce the species in physiographic regions where it is historical or extirpated. The Government of Quebec promotes the conservation and recovery of listed plants in sectors where forestry operations take place by establishing boundaries based on the land-use classification units<sup>17</sup> within which occurrences are found rather than the boundaries of the areas occupied by individuals at a site (Couillard et al. 2012).
- Since 1994, the Montreal Biodome has led a conservation programme that aims to: 1) characterize and monitor occurrences; 2) training and provide scientific and

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<sup>16</sup> Physiographic regions constitute the territorial unit used by the Government of Quebec for protected areas planning and species at risk recovery (Li et al. 1994).

<sup>17</sup> This system is used for land-use planning and particularly for forestry operations in Quebec, making it easier to incorporate the protection of listed species as part of regular planning efforts that take place over much larger landscapes. Furthermore, by incorporating areas of suitable habitat larger than those that may be currently colonized, an increase in abundance is possible and edge effects are reduced.

technical support for partners that manage priority occurrences, and 3) restore historical or extirpated occurrences.

- Since 2002, permanent plots with deer exclosures have been set up to quantify the impact of deer on large protected populations. Invasive slug exclosures with copper bands are also under experimentation.

### In Ontario

- Since 2001, monitoring of a number of occurrences has been undertaken and some historical occurrences have been revisited.
- In 2000-2001, deer exclosures were used in some areas to monitor the impact of deer browsing on vegetation.
- From 2002 to 2010, a group of biologists from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources<sup>18</sup> formed the American Ginseng Recovery Implementation Group. Annual efforts included collecting and planting seeds, removing seeds from visible individuals, monitoring existing populations, finding new populations, educating key staff, and creating visual screening of visible populations.
- In 2010, OMNR published its *Forest Management Guide for Conserving Biodiversity at the Stand and Site Scales* (OMNR 2010) which is to be used by forest managers when planning and implementing forestry operations on Crown land. This document outlines the operational prescription for areas with American Ginseng in order to protect the species from negative impacts from the forestry operations and is based on the directives developed by McConnell and Bjorgan (2004).
- As of 2013, the general habitat for the American Ginseng has been described ([http://files.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/species-at-risk/mnr\\_sar\\_ghd\\_amr\\_gnsg\\_en.pdf](http://files.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/species-at-risk/mnr_sar_ghd_amr_gnsg_en.pdf)) (OMNR 2013) and is protected under Ontario's *Endangered Species Act, 2007*

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<sup>18</sup> In July, 2014, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) became the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR).

## 6.2 Strategic Direction for Recovery

**Table 2. Recovery Planning Table.**

Threat or Limitation	Broad Strategy to Recovery	Priority	General Description of Research and Management Approaches
All	Stewardship and management of the species and its suitable habitat	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide legal protection or binding stewardship status to areas of significance for the species</li> <li>• Implement beneficial management practices (BMP) at the local and landscape levels in order to mitigate threats, with an emphasis on illegal harvest as well as plant and seed mortality</li> <li>• Restore habitats and reintroduce the species within historical and extirpated occurrences</li> </ul>
Knowledge gaps	Monitoring and Research	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct demographic and genetic studies to clarify how American Ginseng populations respond to various threats</li> <li>• Study aspects related to the propagation of individuals (e.g., pollinators; <i>ex situ</i> cultivation for transplantation and reintroduction purposes; short and long distance dispersal pathways)</li> </ul>
		Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement standardized protocols to monitor the species' populations, habitat characteristics and threats</li> <li>• Develop, validate or improve models (e.g. detectability, habitat suitability, population viability)</li> </ul>
All	Communication and Outreach	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish partnerships with governmental departments and agencies, conservation organizations, aboriginal communities, private landowners and the commercial cultivation industry in order to implement a training/outreach/restoration/ reintroduction program</li> <li>• Consider the creation of a North American working group</li> <li>• Improve the communication and data management for species with sensitive data (e.g., educate the media, secure data storage and exchange)</li> </ul>
All threats	Law and Policy	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and verify the compliance with existing environmental laws, regulations and policies to prevent breaches and offenses for all types of activities on all types of land tenures</li> <li>• Develop new policies and programs where gaps exist</li> </ul>

## 7. Critical Habitat

### 7.1 Identification of the Species' Critical Habitat

SARA defines critical habitat as “the habitat that is necessary for the survival or recovery of a listed wildlife species.” Section 41(1)(c) of SARA requires that recovery strategies include an identification of the species' critical habitat, to the extent possible, as well as examples of activities that are likely to result in its destruction. This recovery strategy partially identifies critical habitat, based on the best available information for the American Ginseng as of October 2014. The Schedule of Studies (section 7.2) outlines the activities required for completing the identification of the critical habitat necessary to meet the population and distribution objectives. As new information becomes available, boundaries may be modified and additional critical habitat may be identified.

The identification of critical habitat for the American Ginseng is based on two criteria: habitat occupancy and habitat suitability.

#### 7.1.1 Habitat Occupancy

Habitat occupancy is established by selecting all observation points within extant occurrences (quality ranks A, B, C, D or E<sup>19</sup>) according to the most recent data compilation available in conservation data centres (CDPNQ, NHIC) as well as all observation points within sites compiled in other data sources over the past 20 years (1994 to 2013, inclusively). Twenty years is the threshold established in most conservation data centers beyond which an occurrence is considered historical.

All extant American Ginseng individuals are considered necessary for the recovery of the species. Accordingly, following the precautionary principle, all extant observation points, including within sites with a single plant, are incorporated for this species considering the impacts the main threats have been shown to have on American Ginseng populations over very short periods.

#### 7.1.2 Habitat Suitability

Habitat suitability refers to areas possessing a specific set of biophysical attributes that can support individuals of the species carrying out essential aspects of their lifecycle. The biophysical attributes for American Ginseng suitable habitat in Canada are provided in Table 3 (refer to section 3.3 Needs of the species for references).

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<sup>19</sup> The CDPNQ and NHIC rank the quality of occurrences using the NatureServe methodology that considers the number of individuals (abundance) and/or the integrity of the habitat they occupy :  
A : Excellent (>500 individuals); B : Good (>500 individuals and presence of threats or 176-500 individuals); C : Medium (176-500 individuals and presence of threats or 51-175 individuals); D : Low (51-175 individuals and the presence of threats or < 51 individuals); E : Recent (not ranked); H : Historical; X : Extirpated.

Suitable habitat for American Ginseng is described using a critical function zone of up to 150 m around each plant. The first 100 m serves to maintain the biophysical attributes necessary to support the complete life cycle, facilitate short distance seed dispersal and reduce edge effects (see “suitable growth habitat” in Table 3). An additional 50 m can extend into other types of forests or treed swamps, that although they may not meet all the required biophysical attributes for American Ginseng plants to grow, will contribute in maintaining suitable habitat conditions (e.g., moisture, reduced light penetration) in adjacent suitable growth habitat, as well as facilitate long distance seed dispersal and limit the potential invasion by exotic species (Harper et al. 2005). This definition of suitable habitat is consistent with the *General Habitat Description for American Ginseng* (OMNR 2013) protected by the Government of Ontario under the provincial *Endangered Species Act, 2007*.

**Table 3.** Description of the Biophysical Attributes of Suitable Habitat for the American Ginseng.

Components of habitat suitability	Biophysical Attributes
Suitable growth habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure is typical of mature forests or older secondary forests with few recent disturbances (e.g., large trees, closed-canopy)</li> <li>• Composition of trees is deciduous or mixed with species such as Sugar Maple, White Ash, Bitternut Hickory, Basswood, Red Oak, and Butternut; although some populations are found in White Cedar or Hemlock forests/swamps</li> <li>• Shrub cover is relatively sparse (&lt;25%) and understory companion plant species are generally diverse</li> <li>• Soils are usually of glaciary origin, thick (50 to 100 cm), well drained (drainage classes of 20-well or 30-moderate) and have a relatively neutral pH; although some populations are found on very shallow, rocky soils, sometimes growing directly in small crevices in dolomitic limestone</li> <li>• Light penetration at ground level is low (under 30%; typical of closed-canopy forests) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Applies to a 100 m radius surrounding each plant</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Habitats that maintain the conditions in suitable growth habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other types of forest and treed swamps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Applies to a 50 m radius additional to the first 100 m surrounding each plant</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### 7.1.3 Application of the Critical Habitat Criteria

Critical habitat for the American Ginseng is partially identified in this recovery strategy. It corresponds to the areas of suitable habitat within a 150 m critical function zone around each extant American Ginseng plant. Only wild American Ginseng individuals (including those reintroduced into populations) are considered. The identification of critical habitat is considered partial as most of the known occurrences or sites are not currently considered viable and some of the historical or extirpated occurrences that may be necessary to reach the long term population and distribution objectives are not included.

Following the application of these criteria, 2,590 critical habitat units containing 7,921 ha within the critical habitat zone are identified in Canada, including 334 in Ontario (3,635 ha) and 2,256 in Quebec (4,286 ha). Due to the sensitivities of the species (e.g. illegal harvest), the Minister of the Environment, on the advice of COSEWIC, has restricted the release of information that relates to the location of American Ginseng or its habitat (SARA s. 124). Accordingly, Appendix A (Tables A-1 and A-2) presents the locations of critical habitat units using a 100 x 100 km standardized national UTM grid system. More detailed information on the location of critical habitat units to support protection of the species and its habitat may be requested, on a need-to-know basis, by contacting Environment Canada's Recovery Planning section at: [RecoveryPlanning\\_PI@ec.gc.ca](mailto:RecoveryPlanning_PI@ec.gc.ca).

Any anthropogenic structures (e.g. houses, paved surfaces) and any areas (e.g., agricultural fields, golf courses) that do not have the biophysical attributes of suitable habitat for the American Ginseng are not identified as critical habitat.

## 7.2 Schedule of Studies to Identify Critical Habitat

**Table 4. Schedule of Studies to Identify Critical Habitat.**

Description of Activity	Rationale	Timeline
Confirm location, obtain population information and assess habitat suitability of historical occurrences and occurrences considered extant but having insufficient spatial accuracy. In addition, use this information to review, update and/or refine existing observations and American Ginseng occurrences as per NatureServe protocols	Necessary to reach the short-term and long-term population and distribution objectives	2015-2017
Proceed with an assessment of historical occurrences to determine if individuals or suitable habitat are still present. If assessment is positive, proceed with identification as critical habitat	Necessary to reach the long-term population and distribution objectives	2015-2025
Proceed with an assessment of extirpated occurrences to determine if habitat restoration and American Ginseng reintroduction is technically and biologically feasible. If assessment is positive, proceed with identification as critical habitat	Necessary to reach the long-term population and distribution objectives	2015-2035

### **7.3 Activities Likely to Result in the Destruction of Critical Habitat**

Understanding what constitutes destruction of critical habitat is necessary for the protection and management of critical habitat. Destruction is determined on a case by case basis. Destruction would result if part of the critical habitat were degraded, either permanently or temporarily, such that it would not serve its function when needed by the species. Destruction may result from a single or multiple activities at one point in time or from the cumulative effects of one or more activities over time (Government of Canada 2009). Activities described in Table 5 include those likely to cause destruction of critical habitat for the species; however, destructive activities are not limited to those listed.

**Table 5.** Examples of Activities Likely to Result in the Destruction of Critical Habitat for the American Ginseng.

Description of Activity	Description of Effect	Details of Effect
Construction, maintenance and use of linear infrastructures (e.g., roads, highways, trails, energy corridors, pipelines)	Loss and degradation of suitable habitat including : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the vegetation is removed (e.g., forest cover)</li> <li>- the soil is covered permanently</li> <li>- drainage conditions are modified (e.g. results in poorly-drained soils around American Ginseng plants)</li> <li>- soil disturbances (e.g. all-terrain vehicles) favour introduced and invasive species that change vegetation structure and composition and compete for resources</li> <li>- edge effects into the adjacent forest (e.g., increased light penetration, moisture conditions, ground temperatures, denser shrub and ground layers attract deer who modify vegetation structure and composition through browsing)</li> </ul>	Constitutes destruction at all times if it occurs within the first 100 m of the critical function zone;  Constitute destruction if the activity conducted within the 100-150 m area of the critical function zone affects biophysical attributes within the first 100 m of the critical function zone surrounding American Ginseng plants
Industrial expansion (e.g., mineral extraction, aggregates, industrial areas)		
Urban expansion (e.g., houses, recreational areas and structures)		
Agricultural expansion		
Forest harvesting where higher volumes of timber are harvested (e.g., clear-cutting, strip-cutting)	Loss and degradation of suitable habitat including : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cutting trees to a level that increases light intensity and temperature at ground level, reduces moisture and favours denser shrub and ground layers that attract deer who modify vegetation structure and composition through browsing</li> <li>- Machines damage the forest floor by destroying vegetation and contributing to soil erosion, compaction and leading to changes to drainage</li> <li>- Access roads are built, destroying, fragmenting, creating edge effects and facilitating access to illegal harvesters</li> <li>- Change to forest structure and composition due to selection of species to be harvested and by recruitment of opportunistic or invasive species</li> </ul>	Constitute destruction if the activity conducted within the 100-150 m area of the critical function zone affects biophysical attributes within the first 100 m of the critical function zone surrounding American Ginseng plants
Commercial cultivation of ginseng in woodlots (e.g. site preparation)	Can result in direct or indirect degradation of the vegetation structure and composition <sup>d</sup>	May constitute destruction if activity occurs within the first 100 m of the critical function zone

<sup>d</sup> This activity can lead to the introduction of foreign genetic material as well as diseases that may affect plant vigour and seed production (these aspects are not related to critical habitat).

## **8. Measuring Progress**

The performance indicators presented below provide a way to define and measure progress toward achieving the population and distribution objectives.

- Over the short-term (2015-2025), the abundance of American Ginseng plants and the area of occupied suitable habitats at each extant site has been maintained or increased ;
- Over the long-term (2015-2035), the viability of all extant occurrences has been reached and, where biologically and technically feasible, historical and extirpated occurrences have been restored.

## **9. Statement On Action Plans**

One or more action plans for the American Ginseng will be posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry by the end of 2020.

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## Appendix A: Critical Habitat for the American Ginseng in Canada

*The content of this section has been simplified in order to limit the release of sensitive information. For example, land tenure within each square is not provided.*

**Table A-1.** Critical Habitat for the American Ginseng in Ontario occurs within these 100 x 100 km Standardized UTM grid Squares where Criteria Described in Section 7 are met.

100 x 100 km Grid Square ID <sup>e</sup>	UTM Grid Square Coordinates <sup>f</sup>	
	Easting	Northing
17MG	400000	4600000
17MH	400000	4700000
17MJ	400000	4800000
17MK	400000	4900000
17NH	500000	4700000
17NJ	500000	4800000
17NK	500000	4900000
17PH	600000	4700000
17PJ	600000	4800000
17PK	600000	4900000
17PL	600000	5000000
18TP <sup>g</sup>	256723	4800000
18TQ	260346	4900000
18UR	300000	5000000
18VQ	400000	4900000
18VR	400000	5000000
18WQ	500000	5000000
18WR	500000	5000000
Total: 3,635 ha in 334 critical habitat units		

<sup>e</sup> Based on the standard UTM Military Grid Reference System (see <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/geography-boundary/mapping/topographic-mapping/10098>), where the first 2 digits represent the UTM Zone, the following 2 letters indicate the 100 x 100 km standardized UTM grid. This unique alphanumeric code is based on the methodology produced from the Breeding Bird Atlases of Canada (See <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/> for more information on breeding bird atlases).

<sup>f</sup> The listed coordinates are a cartographic representation of where critical habitat can be found, presented as the southwest corner of the 100 x 100 km standardized UTM grid square containing all or a portion of the critical habitat unit. The coordinates may not fall within critical habitat and are provided as a general location only.

<sup>g</sup> Due to their significantly smaller area, UTM squares falling at the intersection of UTM zones as well as UTM squares with less than 50% situated within Canada are merged with the closest complete UTM square or merged to form a square/rectangle with an area close to 100 x 100 km. This method is applied even if constituent squares do not all contain critical habitat in order to prevent the release of sensitive information. The listed coordinates correspond to those of the southwest corner of the resulting merged square/rectangle.

**Table A-2.** Critical Habitat for the American Ginseng in Quebec occurs within these 100 x 100 km Standardized UTM grid Squares where Criteria Described in Section 7 are met.

100 x 100 km Grid Square ID <sup>h</sup>	UTM Grid Square Coordinates <sup>i</sup>	
	Easting	Northing
18UR	300000	5000000
18US	300000	5100000
18VR	400000	5000000
18VS	400000	5100000
18WQ/18WR <sup>j</sup>	500078	4981039
18XQ/18XR	600000	4984209
18XS	600000	5100000
18YQ/18YR/19BK/19BL	700000	4988027
18YS/19BM	700000	5100000
19CN	300000	5200000
Total: 4,286 ha in 2,256 critical habitat units		

<sup>h</sup> Based on the standard UTM Military Grid Reference System (see <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/geography-boundary/mapping/topographic-mapping/10098>), where the first 2 digits represent the UTM Zone, the following 2 letters indicate the 100 x 100 km standardized UTM grid. This unique alphanumeric code is based on the methodology produced from the Breeding Bird Atlases of Canada (See <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/> for more information on breeding bird atlases).

<sup>i</sup> The listed coordinates are a cartographic representation of where critical habitat can be found, presented as the southwest corner of the 100 x 100 km standardized UTM grid square containing all or a portion of the critical habitat unit. The coordinates may not fall within critical habitat and are provided as a general location only.

<sup>j</sup> Due to their significantly smaller area, UTM squares falling at the intersection of UTM zones as well as UTM squares with less than 50% situated within Canada are merged with the closest complete UTM square or merged to form a square/rectangle with an area close to 100 x 100 km. This method is applied even if constituent squares do not all contain critical habitat in order to prevent the release of sensitive information. The listed coordinates correspond to those of the southwest corner of the resulting merged square/rectangle.

## Appendix B: Effects on the Environment and Other Species

*The content of this section has been simplified in order to limit the release of sensitive information.*

A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is conducted on all SARA recovery planning documents, in accordance with the [Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals](#)<sup>20</sup>. The purpose of a SEA is to incorporate environmental considerations into the development of public policies, plans, and program proposals to support environmentally sound decision-making and to evaluate whether the outcomes of a recovery planning document could affect any component of the environment or any of the [Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#)'s<sup>21</sup> (FSDS) goals and targets.

Recovery planning is intended to benefit species at risk and biodiversity in general. However, it is recognized that strategies may also inadvertently lead to environmental effects beyond the intended benefits. The planning process based on national guidelines directly incorporates consideration of all environmental effects, with a particular focus on possible impacts on non-target species or habitats. The results of the SEA are incorporated directly into the strategy itself, but are also summarized below in this statement.

This federal recovery strategy will clearly benefit the environment by promoting the recovery of American Ginseng. The potential for the strategy to inadvertently lead to adverse effects on other species was considered. The SEA concluded that this strategy will clearly benefit the environment and will not result in any significant adverse effects.

The majority of recovery approaches suggested in this document should have limited or positive effects on non-target species, natural communities or ecological processes. All actions related to further habitat protection would bring direct benefits to the numerous species sharing the American Ginseng's habitat, including other federally-listed species.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=B3186435-1>

<sup>21</sup> [www.ec.gc.ca/dd-sd/default.asp?lang=En&n=F93CD795-1](http://www.ec.gc.ca/dd-sd/default.asp?lang=En&n=F93CD795-1)