

Resolution #16 – Sudbury SCIA – Sandhill Cranes

WHEREAS the population of Sandhill Cranes is increasing significantly in Northeastern Ontario, and;

WHEREAS the crop damage (predation) from these birds now includes horticultural crops (e.g. potatoes) as well as cereal crops and corn, and;

WHEREAS there is no licensed product available in Ontario to discourage the Sandhill Cranes and therefore mitigate the crop damage.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that OSCIA approach the Government of Canada through the Migratory Birds Convention Act to introduce a Sandhill Crane hunt in designated Wildlife Management Units in Ontario, and;

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that Agricorp be asked to develop a spot loss program to compensate farmers for Sandhill Crane predation to horticulture and field crops

Moved Warren Schneckeburger, Seconded by Justin Gaudet (Sudbury SCIA).

Carried

SENT TO Chris Sharp, Population Management Biologist, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada
Doug LaRose, CEO, Agricorp

RESPONSE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE CANADA

Dear Mr. Graham,

Thank you for your letter requesting a limited hunting season for Sandhill Cranes in designated Wildlife Management Units in Ontario. I appreciate OSCIA bringing the resolution to our attention.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) is the federal Department responsible for the protection, conservation and management of birds covered by the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 and for the implementation of the Migratory Birds Regulations, which authorize open hunting seasons for migratory game birds such as Sandhill Cranes.

In response to concerns from stakeholders, ECCC has been collecting data to assess the status and harvest potential for Sandhill Cranes in Ontario as well as to evaluate if a hunting season would help mitigate agricultural conflicts in Ontario. Here is a summary of our findings:

- Approximately 14,000 Sandhill Cranes migrate through agricultural areas of northern and central Ontario each year. The small population size of Sandhill Cranes in Ontario represents a small harvest potential (maximum of approximately 900 cranes annually) and limited hunting opportunities. Additionally, a significant resource investment would be required to ensure the*

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sustainability of the population exposed to any harvest pressure.

- The majority of damage occurs in agricultural areas on the fringe of the boreal forest and, with the exception of potatoes, occurs before September 1st. September 1st is important as it marks the earliest start date for any migratory game bird hunting season in Ontario as prescribed by the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994. As such, hunting will not be a practical tool for mitigating agricultural conflicts with Sandhill Cranes for most producers in Ontario and therefore, on-farm mitigation strategies continue to be the most effective approach.*
- Alternative mitigation strategies have been effectively applied elsewhere to help reduce agricultural conflicts with cranes.*

As a result, ECCC is not planning to initiate a hunting season for Sandhill Cranes in Ontario. Our primary focus is to enhance knowledge regarding conflict mitigation and provide improved guidance and mitigation tools for stakeholders experiencing significant losses due to conflicts with Sandhill Cranes.

I appreciate the concerns OSCIA has raised. Please be advised that any producer experiencing significant crop damage caused by migratory birds may apply for a Damage or Danger permit from ECCC's Canadian Wildlife Service. These permits are available at no cost to the applicant and authorize, subject to certain terms and conditions, the permit holder and their nominees to undertake specified activities, such as scaring or killing, to manage cranes that are causing or likely to cause damage to their property. For information about permits, please go to <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-bird-permits/application-forms.html> I would encourage you to contact Chris Sharp by telephone for more information on applying for a Damage or Danger permit and about the use of alternative management strategies to manage Sandhill Crane conflicts. If your association or individual producers wish more information, please have them contact the Canadian Wildlife Service's Ontario regional office by telephone at 613-990-8355 or by email at ec.Wildlife.Ontario.ec@canada.ca.

Sincerely,

*Lesley Dunn,
Regional Director, Canadian Wildlife Service – Ontario Region
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Cc : Christopher Sharp, CWS-Ontario

RESPONSE FROM AGRICORP (Excerpt from Response under Resolution #13)

Resolution #16 - Sandhill Cranes

We are aware of concerns about crop damage caused by wildlife and recognize how this resolution supports your previous resolutions suggesting improved coverage for wildlife damage.

Wildlife damage is an insured peril under horticulture, cereal and corn Production Insurance plans. Production claims are paid when yields fall below a producer's guarantee. For these plans, producers can receive a yield guarantee of up to 90 per cent of their individual average farm yield and can have replant coverage. This is the maximum coverage level available in Canada. Spot-loss coverage is a significant policy change requiring the approval of OMAFRA and AAFC.

We understand that discussions have been taking place at the Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict working group. At the last working group meeting, OSCIA indicated that they have entered into a multi-year agreement with the Canadian Wildlife Service to study the habitat, feeding habits and damage to crops. The results of this research will help to understand the scale and scope of the problem, and we will be interested to hear the results through the working group. We will continue to attend these meetings and will support OMAFRA on this issue as required.

A significant policy change like spot-loss coverage for wildlife damage requires the approval of the provincial and federal governments so continuing the discussions at this working group would be appropriate. I have directed staff to share your resolution with our colleagues at OMAFRA. For more discussion on coverage for crop destroyed by wildlife, contact Mark LaBerge, Manager, Insurance and Partnerships Unit at OMAFRA at 519-820-6503.