

## 7 Conclusions

Blanding's turtles inhabit the SMH Conservation Forest and surrounding lands. Due to a variety of historic, current and future stressors, the SMH population is at high risk of decline and eventual extirpation. Planned urban development will exacerbate this risk. Conservation of the population will require sustained financial support for the management options recommended herein. Several specific actions, such as measures to reduce adult mortality, increase hatchling success, and to limit urban development in the most sensitive core habitats, may significantly curtail the predictable population decline.

Excess, suitable core habitat is present in the area, and improved linkages to other habitats and sub-populations should be investigated to support the SMH population. Blanding's turtle conservation and management in the SMH should remain a long term priority of the City of Ottawa and other stakeholders to help preserve this threatened, unique species. Should the objectives, targets and recommendations of the Conservation Needs Assessment not be implemented, the Blanding's turtle in the SMH will continue to face threats to their core habitats and population abundance. Approaches to implement the Conservation Needs Assessment successfully, must consider the recommended strategies to beneficially support Blanding's turtles through activities focused on the species, core habitats, research, education, awareness, collaboration and legislative aspects. The objective is to seek a sustainable, net global benefit to this species at risk while at the same time allowing for economic growth and prosperity for the residents of Ottawa.

In addition, the recommendations made to curtail further habitat loss, degradation and other threats to the SMH Blanding's turtle should be explored prior to any further urban development outside of the Terry Fox Drive planning area. The conservation and protection of this species at risk requires collaboration, sustainable funding, innovation and enforcement by government, landowners, researchers, non-governmental organizations and the public.

