



INFORMATION SUMMARY FOR CONSULTATIONS ON THE PROPOSED LISTING OF BULL TROUT (WESTERN ARCTIC POPULATIONS) AS SPECIAL CONCERN UNDER THE *SPECIES AT RISK ACT*

The Species at Risk Act

As part of its strategy for the protection of species at risk, the Government of Canada proclaimed the *Species at Risk Act* in 2003. One of the purposes of the Act is to provide for the legal protection of wildlife species and the conservation of biological diversity. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has the mandate to conduct assessments on the status of wildlife species and categorize them according to their level of risk for extinction (extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, or special concern). The Government of Canada considers the scientific evidence, the comments received from Canadians during consultations, and the potential socio-economic impacts before making a decision whether or not to include the species on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under SARA. Recovery planning is undertaken for all listed species, and prohibitions are put in place protecting species assessed as extirpated, endangered or threatened, from being harmed. Prohibitions do not apply to species of special concern; however, a management plan will be prepared.

About Bull Trout

The Bull Trout belongs to the salmon and trout family, and is part of the char subgroup that includes Dolly

Varden, Lake Trout, Brook Trout and Arctic Char. Bull Trout has a long and slender body, a large broad head and prominent upper jaw with a slightly forked tail fin. Highly colorful, its back is olive-green to blue-grey, sides are silvery with small pink, lilac, yellow-orange or red spots, the belly is pale in colour, and may become yellow, orange or red in males during spawning and the pelvic and anal fins have white leading edges with no black line. Size at maturity is dependent upon life history.

As part of the consultation process, the Government of Canada would like to hear your comments on the potential impacts of listing the Western Arctic population of Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), as special concern under the *Species at Risk Act*.

The Canadian distribution extends throughout British Columbia and western Alberta, with a northern limit into the southern Yukon and the central portion of the Northwest Territories. Based on genetic analysis, range disjunction and distribution, Bull Trout have been divided into five designated units (DU): Southcoast BC populations (DU1); **Western Arctic populations (DU2)**; Yukon



Image of Adult Bull Trout (Photo credit: Fisheries and Oceans Canada)

populations (DU3); Saskatchewan-Nelson populations (DU4); and Pacific populations (DU5).

Special Concern status

The level of protection and recovery actions undertaken for a species listed under SARA depends on its assessed level of risk for extinction. Bull Trout, Western Arctic population has been assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as a species of special concern. This is the lowest level of risk category and indicates that this species is not presently endangered, but is considered to be sensitive to human activities and natural events due to biological factors and/or threats.

Threats

The greatest threats to Bull Trout include degraded and fragmented habitat resulting from development and the introduction of non-native species. Bull Trout are vulnerable to

hybridization with introduced Brook Trout in areas where both species now occur. Impacts from oil and gas development, forestry, mining, transportation infrastructure and hydroelectric projects affect habitat by increasing siltation and water temperatures or decreasing stream flow volumes. In turn, these changes reduce reproductive success. As well, barriers to fish movement, such as dams, weirs, and elevated stream temperatures, fragment migratory corridors required for spawning. Overfishing may also remain a threat. As Bull Trout are difficult to distinguish from other char and trout being recreationally fished, the misidentification by fishers also poses a risk.

Protection and recovery

If the Bull Trout, Western Arctic populations are added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk as a species of special concern, they will not be subject to restrictions under SARA; however, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will be required to produce a management plan for the species in an effort to ensure that it does not become further at risk due to human activity. A management plan will include conservation measures for the species and set goals and objectives for maintaining sustainable population levels.

Possible management measures

If the Bull Trout, Western Arctic population, is listed under SARA, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will, in



Bull Trout, Western Arctic populations, include those populations in the Mackenzie River system and major tributaries, such as the Liard, Peace and Athabasca rivers.

collaboration and consultation with stakeholders and partners, use the best available information to develop a management plan

The consultation process – Your comments

As part of the consultation process, the Government of Canada would like to hear your opinions on listing Bull Trout, Western Arctic population, as special concern under SARA, and any comments on the potential positive and negative impacts this listing would have on you, your industry, and/or the ecosystem. Your answers to the following questions will be used to help inform the decision whether or not to list the species under SARA:

1. What would be the environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of listing this population under SARA?
2. Do you support listing the Bull Trout, Western Arctic populations as special concern on the List of Wildlife

Species at Risk under SARA? Why or why not?

3. Do you represent an industry, community, Aboriginal community or organization, or other group? If so, which group or sector do you represent?

To submit answers to the above questions or share your comments, please contact:

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Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N6
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For a copy of the COSEWIC assessment for this species, or for other general inquiries, please visit the Species at Risk Public Registry

Reference

COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report on the Bull Trout *Salvelinus confluentus* in Canada (2013)