

Response Statement - Atlantic Salmon, Gaspé-Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence population

December 8, 2011

Common Name: Atlantic Salmon, Gaspé-Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence population

Scientific Name: *Salmo salar*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Special Concern

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will undertake consultations with the governments of Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Atlantic Salmon, Gaspé-Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence population, should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Special Concern. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Atlantic Salmon, Gaspé-Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence population, to the Governor in Council upon completion of consultations.

Once a species has been assessed by COSEWIC, further steps must be undertaken before it is added to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. For more information on this process, please view [The Species Listing Process Under SARA](#).

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: This species requires rivers or streams that are generally clear, cool and well-oxygenated for reproduction and the first few years of rearing, but undertakes lengthy feeding migrations in the North Atlantic Ocean as older juveniles and adults. This population breeds in rivers from the Ouelle River (excluded) in the western Gaspé Peninsula southward and eastward to the northern tip of Cape Breton. Small (one-sea-winter) and large (multi-sea-winter) fish have both declined over the last 3 generations, approximately 34% and 19%, respectively, for a net decline of all mature individuals of about 28%. This recent 3 generation decline represents a continuation of a decline extending back at least to the 1980's. The number of mature individuals remains over 100,000; however, the majority spawn in a single major river system, the Miramichi, in New Brunswick. Freshwater habitat quality is a concern in some areas, particularly in Prince Edward Island where some remaining populations are maintained by hatchery supplementation. Invasive and illegally introduced species, such as smallmouth bass, are a poorly understood threat in some freshwater habitats. Poor marine survival is related to substantial but incompletely understood changes in marine ecosystems.

Occurrence: Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Atlantic Ocean

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency

Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:

Quebec

New Brunswick

Nova Scotia

Prince Edward Island

Applicable federal legislation: Fisheries are managed and fish and fish habitat are protected under the *Fisheries Act*.

Conservation activities underway: Atlantic Salmon is managed jointly by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Maritime Provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. An Integrated Fisheries Management Plan serves as an umbrella to guide the management of Atlantic Salmon through science advice for watershed based management plans and for Aboriginal Food, Social and Ceremonial needs. Provincial legislation regulates access by issuing recreational angling licences and tags, and DFO oversees the management of First Nations access through Food, Social and Ceremonial negotiations and the issuance of fishing tags. In Quebec, DFO has delegated powers to manage Atlantic Salmon to the Province. There have been no commercial fisheries in Atlantic Canada since 1984. Other conservation measures are in place for both recreational and aboriginal fisheries which are complex and vary across jurisdictions. They include fisheries closures, season and gear restrictions as well as retention and release conditions. DFO has Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with each province in the Maritimes, and several with First Nations and watershed management committees to enhance and promote salmon conservation efforts. Comprehensive monitoring programs to determine the status of many salmon stocks are conducted by DFO and the province of Quebec with stakeholders support. In 2009, DFO released the Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Policy intended to transform the approach to conserving Atlantic Salmon, their habitat and dependant ecosystems. DFO contributes to the Atlantic-wide Salmon Advisory Committee (ASAC) and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO). Atlantic Salmon habitat is protected under the *Fisheries Act*.