

Response Statement - Hickorynut

December 8, 2011

Common Name: Hickorynut

Scientific Name: *Obovaria olivaria*

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

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 Ontario and Quebec, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Hickorynut should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Endangered. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Hickorynut 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 freshwater mussel lives in mid-sized to large rivers in southern Ontario and Quebec. There has been an historical decline in the species' distribution with losses of the populations in the Detroit and Niagara rivers. Other locations are threatened by the continuing invasion of dreissenid mussels. In addition, the one known host of this mussel, the Lake Sturgeon, is at risk and may be declining in some locations where the mussel is known to still occur. The species is also affected by degraded water quality in many freshwater systems in southern Ontario and Quebec.

Occurrence: Ontario, Quebec

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

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

Ontario

Quebec

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

Conservation activities underway: Few conservation efforts exclusively target the Hickorynut mussel, however, this species and its habitat benefit through general conservation and stewardship efforts across its range. The federal, provincial, watershed, and municipal programs that promote and implement best management practices and stewardship activities to improve land and water resource management will also improve water quality and enhance habitat suitability within the current and historic distribution of *O. olivaria* and its host fish, Lake Sturgeon. For example, in the Great Lakes basin, remedial action plans associated with areas of concern (AOCs) have been working towards controlling pollution and conserving and protecting both human and ecosystem health in these environmentally degraded locations. A local natural history centre program through Bishop Mills Natural History Centre in Ontario advocates for voluntary surveys to improve understanding of the diversity and distribution of mussels, including Hickorynut. Additionally, various outreach and stewardship programs offered through Conservation Authorities in Ontario promote enhancing or restoring water quality and aquatic habitat by reducing siltation, nutrient and contaminant loadings, and through habitat restoration projects. Additional research needs have been identified and may reveal other conservation efforts that are needed to protect this species.