

Response Statement - Atlantic Sturgeon, Maritimes populations

December 8, 2011

Common Name: Atlantic Sturgeon, Maritimes populations

Scientific Name: *Acipenser oxyrinchus*

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

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 Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Atlantic Sturgeon, Maritimes populations, should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Threatened. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Atlantic Sturgeon, Maritimes populations, 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 large-bodied, slow-growing and late-maturing fish spawns only within the lower Saint John River area. The species has a relatively small breeding population and is subject to regulated commercial and recreational fisheries. These fisheries, however, receive limited monitoring in terms of their effects on this species making its viability highly uncertain.

Occurrence: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, 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:

Newfoundland and Labrador

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: There is currently a commercial fishery for Atlantic Sturgeon in the Saint John River which has a quota of 350 fish. All retained Atlantic Sturgeon are required to be tagged with a security tag provided by DFO, and the license holder must contact an independent dockside monitoring company to advise them of the number and sex of Atlantic Sturgeon caught and retained, and to report the tag numbers used. License holders are also required to submit detailed logbooks at the close of the season, and to return all unused tags. This data is used to make management decisions about the fishery. Fisheries officers monitor the fishery as part of their regular patrols in the area. There is also a recreational fishery for Atlantic Sturgeon in this river that is primarily catch-and-release, although a small number can be retained. DFO is currently collaborating with multiple stakeholders and partners to undertake scientific research on Atlantic Sturgeon, including hydro-acoustic tracking studies to help identify spawning areas and an examination of the scope for interaction between Atlantic Sturgeon and in-stream tidal power generation. Atlantic Sturgeon is currently listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Appendix II, so Canada must demonstrate that exports of Atlantic Sturgeon products will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild. As part of satisfying this requirement, Canada is working with international partners to develop a strategy for the sustainable management of Atlantic Sturgeon.