

Response Statement - Spotted Gar

January 11, 2017

Common Name: Spotted Gar

Scientific Name: *Lepisosteus oculatus*

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: COSEWIC has reassessed the the Spotted Gar, currently on the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) as Threatened and concluded its status has changed. The Minister of the Environment will forward the new COSEWIC assessment of the Spotted Gar as Endangered to the Governor in Council as soon as possible after the close of the normal consultation period and analysis as appropriate. During the normal consultation period the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will consult with the government of Ontario, Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Spotted Gar should have its Schedule 1 status of Threatened changed to Endangered.

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 has a very limited distribution in Canada and populations are known from only three coastal wetlands of Lake Erie. Shallow vegetated habitats that are required for all life stages continue to be degraded and are at risk from invasive aquatic vegetation, removal of native vegetation, filling, dredging, and siltation.

Occurrence: Ontario

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency

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

Ontario

Other applicable legislation: Protected under the Fisheries Protection and Pollution Prevention provisions of the *Fisheries Act*. When the species is found within national parks of Canada or other lands administered by the Parks Canada Agency, it is protected or managed under the *Canada National Parks Act* or through measures or management tools available to the Parks Canada Agency under other legislation. Where it occurs in a National Wildlife Area this species is subject to the *Wildlife Area Regulations* under the *Canada Wildlife Act*, which prohibits activities that could be harmful to species and to their habitat, unless a permit is issued indicating the permitted activity.

Conservation activities underway: A proposed recovery strategy and action plan is being prepared for the Spotted Gar under the latest proposed status of Endangered. A recovery strategy was finalized in 2012 when the species was listed as Threatened. Projects summarized below stem from activities prescribed in that document. The species is included in the ecosystem-based Essex-Erie recovery strategy, which will play a central role in recovering Spotted Gar populations in the region. The Rondeau Bay aquatic vegetation issues working group, a multi-agency group, was formed to promote and protect species at risk and to provide guidance and support to stewardship initiatives within the Rondeau Bay watershed. The Rondeau Bay's Ecological Integrity Project, which commenced in 2007, continues to reconstruct/restore the function of wetland systems in sub-watersheds of Rondeau Bay. Research on Spotted Gar includes life history, targeted surveys on extant populations and preferred habitats, genetic variation, threat evaluation, movements within Rondeau Bay to determine home range and habitat utilization and distribution of adults and juveniles in Rondeau and Long Point bays and Hamilton Harbour. In 2012-14, efforts were made to include species at risk protection in municipal planning in Ontario. DFO developed federal species at risk guidelines for insertion into official planning documents; to date, two municipalities have incorporated the guidelines. Information on SARA legislation, critical habitat and recovery were included in the Drainage Superintendent course in 2012 and presentations on species at risk critical habitat were given to drainage engineers to continue to build relationship with drainage supervisors, engineers and contractors to limit the effects of drainage activities on coastal wetland habitats. Various Conservation Authorities continue to play a vital role in stewardship and public education programs that have resulted in increased awareness of species at risk and improvements to habitat and water quality throughout the Spotted Gar range in Ontario. Progress on recovery implementation of activities prescribed in the 2012 recovery strategy can be found in the progress report, which will be available on the SARA Registry in the near future.