

# Response Statement - Northern Sunfish, Great Lakes - Upper St. Lawrence populations

January 11, 2017

**Common Name:** Northern Sunfish, Great Lakes - Upper St. Lawrence populations

**Scientific Name:** *Lepomis peltastes*

**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 the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Northern Sunfish, Great Lakes - Upper St. Lawrence populations to the Governor in Council as soon as possible following completion of the normal consultation period and analysis as appropriate. During the normal consultation period, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will consult with the governments of Ontario and Quebec, Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Northern Sunfish, Great Lakes - Upper St. Lawrence populations should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Special Concern.

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 is a small-bodied member of the sunfish family that inhabits shallow vegetated areas of warm lakes, ponds, and slow-flowing rivers. Its spatial distribution is relatively small and likely patchy. It is suspected that the index of area of occupancy and abundance of the species has declined. Threats are variable across its range with some areas of declining habitat quality and other areas with improving habitat quality. Overall, the threats of siltation, contaminants, and invasive species were assessed as high. The species is likely to become Threatened unless these threats are effectively ameliorated.

**Occurrence:** Ontario, Quebec

**Competent Minister(s):**

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency

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

Ontario

Quebec

**Applicable federal 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.

**Conservation activities underway:** A management plan will be prepared when the Northern Sunfish becomes listed. In Ontario, the Northern Sunfish, although not specifically included, has benefited from ecosystem-based recovery programs for the Sydenham, Thames, Grand and Ausable rivers. Recovery activities implemented include research and monitoring programs to reduce identified threats. Stewardship and awareness initiatives have been developed by these ecosystem-based recovery teams and are ongoing. Funds from the Habitat Stewardship Program have been provided annually to participating conservation authorities to promote stewardship activities outlined in these ecosystem-based recovery strategies. Activities supported under these programs focus on increasing landowner awareness of species at risk as well as the reduction of sediment and nutrient loading through the promotion of Best Management Practices to improve habitat conditions. In Quebec, the distribution of Northern Sunfish overlaps those of other species at risk (Eastern Sand Darter, Channel Darter and Bridle Shiner) and could benefit from measures identified in the recovery strategies developed for those species.