

Response Statement - Lake Erie Watersnake

January 11, 2017

Common Name: Lake Erie Watersnake

Scientific Name: *Nerodia sipedon insularum*

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: COSEWIC has reassessed the Lake Erie Watersnake, currently on the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) as Endangered and concluded its status has changed. The Minister of the Environment will forward the new COSEWIC assessment of the Lake Erie Watersnake as Special Concern 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 Environment will consult with the government of Ontario, Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Lake Erie Watersnake should have its Schedule 1 status of Endangered changed to 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: The Canadian distribution of this unique population of watersnakes is confined to four small islands in Lake Erie. In the United States, subpopulations have recovered because of an increased fish prey base, provided by introduced Round Goby. It is uncertain whether a similar recovery has occurred in Canadian subpopulations. There is concern that the largest subpopulation on Pelee Island continues to be threatened by road mortality, shoreline development, and persecution by humans.

Occurrence: Ontario

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Environment

Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency

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

Ontario

Other applicable legislation: 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: The Lake Erie Watersnake (*Nerodia sipedon insularum*) is included in the Multi-species Action Plan for Point Pelee National Park of Canada and the Niagara National Historic Sites of Canada. A draft Recovery Strategy for the Lake Erie Watersnake in Canada is being prepared and is scheduled for posting on the Species at Risk Public Registry in 2017.