Response Statement - Paxton Lake Benthic Threespine Stickleback

December 2, 2010

Common Name: Paxton Lake Benthic Threespine Stickleback
Scientific Name: *Gasterosteus aculeatus*

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 above assessment confirms the classification of this wildlife species in Schedule 1, the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* as Endangered. Activities will continue to be undertaken in a manner consistent with the purposes, and according to the timelines identified in, the *Species at Risk Act*.

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: This small freshwater fish is a unique Canadian endemic that is restricted to a single small lake in coastal British Columbia (BC). The wildlife species is highly susceptible to extinction from aquatic invasive species introductions that have been observed to cause rapid extinction of similar species in at least two other lakes. Invasive aquatic species continue to increase in lakes on adjacent Vancouver Island and the lower mainland of BC, and there is, therefore, a reasonable likelihood that invasives could be introduced into the habitat of the species over the next 10 years. This species is also susceptible to habitat loss and degradation from water extraction and land use activities in the surrounding landscape.

Occurrence: British Columbia

Competent Minister(s):
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

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

Conservation activities underway: The Recovery Strategy for Paxton Lake, Enos Lake, and Vananda Creek Stickleback Species Pairs was posted to the SARA Registry in 2007. Captive populations of limnetic and benthic sticklebacks continue to be maintained in order to preserve the species' genetic structure. These populations may provide a source for reintroductions in the future. Recovery actions include: monitoring of the status of species pairs; formalized laboratory husbandry techniques; translocation to experimental ponds; genetics research; and ecological and evolutionary research. Public awareness and education efforts have included the creation of a Stickleback Species Pair brochure and a feature on the television program "Evolution in Action". The Action Plan is currently under development.