

# Response Statement - Salamander Mussel

*December 8, 2011*

**Common Name:** Salamander Mussel

**Scientific Name:** *Simpsonaias ambigua*

**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 the Salamander Mussel which is already on Schedule 1, the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk*. This species will thus remain on the List as Endangered and 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 freshwater mussel was reported from two rivers in southern Ontario in 1998. Surveys since the original COSEWIC assessment (2001) have found live individuals still along the Sydenham River. Despite extensive additional sampling, the half-shell found in 1998 is the only evidence of this species along the Thames River. Habitat quality continues to decline from intense agriculture, urban development, and pollution from point and non-point sources. In addition, this mussel only uses the Mudpuppy, a salamander, as its host; threats to the salamander are also threats to the mussel.

**Occurrence:** Ontario

**Competent Minister(s):**

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

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

**Conservation activities underway:** The Salamander Mussel has been listed as Endangered under SARA since 2003 and therefore prohibitions under the Act already apply. A recovery strategy for five freshwater mussel species, including the Salamander Mussel (previously referred to as the Mudpuppy Mussel), was developed in 2006 and is currently being implemented. For example, in 2009 studies were conducted to evaluate the Round Goby, an invasive species, as a threat to the critical habitat of freshwater mussels at risk including the Salamander Mussel in Ontario. Additionally, the species is also included in the ecosystem-based recovery strategy for the Sydenham River. Habitat Stewardship Funds have been provided annually to the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority to promote stewardship in the Sydenham River ecosystem which supports a total of 14 aquatic species at risk. Activities included: the reduction of sediment and nutrient loading through 'hands on' habitat improvement; increasing landowner awareness of species at risk; and an evaluation of the impact of stewardship initiatives over time through benthic sampling, water quality testing and electro-fishing.