

# Response Statement - Eastern Musk Turtle

**December 18, 2013**

**Common Name:** Eastern Musk Turtle

**Scientific Name:** *Sternotherus odoratus*

**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 re-assessment of the Eastern Musk Turtle to the Governor in Council (GiC) as soon as possible after the close of the normal consultation period. This species is currently on the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Threatened. The Minister of Environment will consult with the governments of Ontario and Quebec, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Eastern Musk Turtle should have its Schedule 1 status of Threatened 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:** This species occupies shallow waters of lakes, rivers, and ponds. In southwestern Ontario, the species has declined substantially and is now restricted to a few tiny, scattered populations. Throughout its Canadian range, this species is vulnerable to increased mortality of adults and juveniles from recreational boating, development and loss of shoreline habitat, and fisheries by-catch. The species has delayed maturity and a low reproductive rate with a small clutch size. Since the previous assessment in 2002, increased survey effort has found more populations in eastern Ontario and adjacent areas of Quebec. The species distribution range remains unchanged, but losses in the southern half of its range make it near Threatened.

**Occurrence:** Ontario, Quebec

**Competent Minister(s):**

Minister of Environment

Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency

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

Ontario

Quebec

**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:** A recovery strategy for the Eastern Musk Turtle is in development; however if it is listed as Special Concern before the recovery strategy is completed, that document will be converted into a management plan.