

Response Statement - Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussel

December 8, 2011

Common Name: Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussel

Scientific Name: *Gonidea angulata*

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 Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC re-assessment of the Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussel to the Governor in Council (GiC) within three months. This species is currently on the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Special Concern. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will consult with the government of British Columbia, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussel should have its Schedule 1 status of Special Concern changed to Endangered.

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 mussel, one of only a few species of freshwater mussel in British Columbia, is restricted in Canada to the Okanagan basin. Historically, channelization and water regulation in the Okanagan River have affected mussel beds and caused population reduction. Additional sites have been found since the original COSEWIC assessment (2003). Currently, Zebra and Quagga (dreissenid) Mussels are the most serious potential threat to the native mussel. Dreissenid mussels have had devastating effects on native unionid communities elsewhere, such as in the Great Lakes region. A recent assessment of the sensitivity of the Okanagan basin to dreissenid mussels demonstrated that the latter could spread quickly and establish intense infestation on native mussels once introduced. Within the foreseeable future, the introduction of dreissenids into the Okanagan basin is likely because they can survive for days out of water and are known to be transported between water bodies on trailered watercrafts; dreissenid mussels have been intercepted on trailered boats heading to British Columbia in recent years. Ongoing foreshore and riparian development, and some methods of control of invasive Eurasian Watermilfoil reduces habitat and affects water quality.

Occurrence: British Columbia

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

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

British Columbia

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

Conservation activities underway: Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussel benefits from the application and monitoring of existing legislation, guidelines and best management practices. The species is being integrated into federal, provincial, regional, municipal planning documents and guidelines as more is learnt about the species. Inventory guidelines for freshwater molluscs and the B.C. Conservation Data Centre reporting guidelines have been established and continue to be used and improved. The standardized protocol for mollusc inventory, habitat and threat information collection has been refined. The Large Lakes Protocol has been distributed to the public, which incorporates mussel information into shoreline sensitivity ratings which guides development activities. Watershed scale restoration projects are underway that consider Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussels.