

Response Statement - Plains Bison

January 13, 2015

Common Name: Plains Bison

Scientific Name: *Bison bison bison*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Threatened

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The Minister of Environment will undertake consultations with the governments of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Wildlife Management Advisory Council - North Slope, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Plains Bison should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Threatened. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Plains Bison to the Governor in Council upon completion of consultations.

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 bison occurs in only five isolated wild subpopulations in Canada. There are approximately 1,200 to 1,500 mature individuals, of which about half occur in one subpopulation located outside of the historical range. The total number of individuals has increased by 36% since the last assessment in 2004, but the total remains a tiny fraction of their numbers of 200 years ago. Currently they occupy less than 0.5% of their original range in Canada. This animal continues to face a number of threats to its persistence. Further increases in population size or the addition of new subpopulations is curtailed by fragmented or unsuitable habitat that is often managed to exclude bison. An overall decline is projected for wild subpopulations because they are managed to control or reduce population size and are subject to unpredictable but potentially catastrophic future events, mainly disease outbreaks and extreme weather.

Occurrence: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Environment

Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency

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

British Columbia

Alberta

Saskatchewan

Applicable federal 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. Where it occurs in a National Wildlife Area this species is subject to the *Wildlife Area Regulations* under the *Canada Wildlife Act*, which prohibits activities that could be harmful to species and to their habitat, unless a permit is issued indicating the permitted activity.