



Bull trout

Saskatchewan-Nelson rivers populations

Consultations on listing under the *Species at Risk Act*

The Saskatchewan-Nelson rivers populations of **Bull trout** have been assessed as “threatened” by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Before deciding whether these populations will be protected under the *Species at Risk Act*, Fisheries and Oceans Canada would like your opinion, comments and suggestions regarding the possible ecological, cultural and economic impacts of listing or not listing it.

Please provide your input by **July 15, 2015**.



Photo credit:
J. Stewart, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

The Bull trout belongs to the salmon and trout family, and is part of the char subgroup that includes Dolly varden, Lake trout, Brook trout and Arctic char. Bull trout has a long and slender body, a large broad head and prominent upper jaw with a slightly forked tail fin. Highly colorful, its back is olive-green to blue-grey, sides are silvery with small pink, lilac, yellow-orange or red spots, the belly is pale in colour, and may become yellow, orange or red in males during spawning and the pelvic and anal fins have white leading edges with no black line. Size at maturity is dependent upon life history.

The Canadian distribution extends throughout British Columbia and western Alberta, with a northern limit into the southern Yukon and the central portion of the Northwest Territories. Based on genetic analysis, range disjunction and distribution, Bull trout have been divided into five designated units (DU): Southcoast BC populations (DU1); Western Arctic populations (DU2); Yukon populations (DU3); **Saskatchewan-Nelson populations (DU4)**; and Pacific populations (DU5). The Saskatchewan-Nelson populations are restricted to Alberta and are found primarily in the drainages of the North and South Saskatchewan rivers.

Proposed listing under SARA: Threatened

The Saskatchewan-Nelson populations of Bull trout were assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in 2012 as a threatened species.

Provincially, the Bull trout is listed as *special concern* in Alberta, and is considered to *may be at risk* in the Northwest Territories.

The purposes of the *Species at Risk Act* are to prevent the disappearance of wildlife species, to provide for their recovery and to encourage the management of special concern species

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has the mandate to conduct assessments on the status of wildlife species and categorize them according to their level of risk for extinction (extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, or special concern).

The Government of Canada considers scientific evidence, comments received from Canadians during consultations, and potential socio-economic impacts before making a decision whether or not to include the species on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under SARA.

Recovery planning is undertaken for all listed species, and prohibitions are put in place protecting species assessed as extirpated, endangered or threatened.

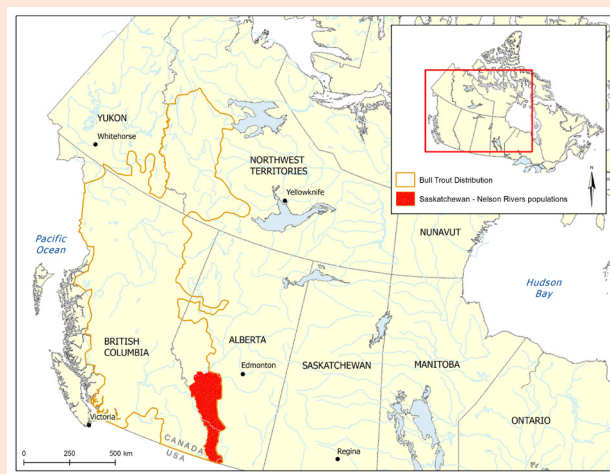
The consultation process

The Government of Canada would like to hear your input on listing the Saskatchewan-Nelson rivers population of Bull trout as threatened under the *Species at Risk Act*, and any comments on the potential positive and negative impacts this listing would have on you, your industry, your community and/or the ecosystem.

*To provide your input, please complete and return the attached **survey** to fwisar@dfo-mpo.gc.ca or go to SARAreistry.gc.ca*
Your answers will be used to help inform the decision whether or not to list the species.

Habitat

The Bull trout is a coldwater species found in lakes, streams and rivers from sea level to mountainous areas. Its habitat has been described by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as “cold, clean, complex and connected.” Sexual maturity occurs between five and seven years of age. Spawning occurs in the fall, when water temperatures fall below 10 degrees Celsius. Preferred spawning areas are cold, unpolluted moving streams with cobble or loose gravel substrates and are associated with groundwater sources.



Threats

The greatest threats include degraded and fragmented habitat resulting from development and the introduction of non-native species. Bull trout are vulnerable to hybridization with introduced Brook trout in areas where both species now occur. Impacts from oil and gas development, forestry, mining, transportation infrastructure and hydroelectric projects affect habitat by increasing siltation and water temperatures or decreasing stream flow volumes. In turn, these changes reduce reproductive success. As well, barriers to fish movement, such as dams, weirs, and elevated stream temperatures, fragment migratory corridors required for spawning. Overfishing and poaching may also remain a threat. As Bull trout are difficult to distinguish from other char and trout being recreationally fished, the misidentification by fishers also poses a risk.

Possible management measures

If listed under SARA, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will, in collaboration and consultation with stakeholders and partners, use the best available information to develop a recovery strategy and action plan for the species.

Protection and recovery of species under SARA

If the Saskatchewan-Nelson rivers population are added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk as threatened, they will be legally protected under SARA and subject to prohibitions. It will be illegal to kill, harm, harass, capture or take individuals from this population, or possess, buy, sell or trade any part of one unless authorized by a permit issued under SARA. It will also be illegal to destroy the critical habitat of the Saskatchewan-Nelson rivers population of Bull trout– the habitat necessary for its survival and recovery - once it is identified in the recovery strategy or action plan.