



CONSULTATION ON AMENDING THE LIST OF SPECIES UNDER THE *SPECIES AT RISK ACT*

Terrestrial Species



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada

Canada 

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ADDITION OF SPECIES TO THE SPECIES AT RISK ACT

THE SPECIES AT RISK ACT AND THE LIST OF WILDLIFE SPECIES AT RISK

The Government of Canada is committed to preventing the disappearance of wildlife species at risk from our lands. As part of its strategy for realizing that commitment, on June 5, 2003, the Government of Canada proclaimed the Species at Risk Act (SARA). Attached to the Act is Schedule 1, the list of the species provided for under SARA, also called the List of Wildlife Species at Risk. Extirpated, Endangered and Threatened species on Schedule 1 benefit from the protection afforded by the prohibitions and from recovery planning requirements under SARA. Special Concern species benefit from its management planning requirements.

The policy “Timeline for amendments to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*” policy has set standardized timelines for listing decisions. These timelines mean that the Minister will seek to have the final decision made within 24 months. The 24 months begin with the date that the Minister receives a species’ status assessment from the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) when COSEWIC submits its Annual Report. This receipt date is published in the response statement for each species.

The [“Timeline for amendments to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*”](#) policy and the [COSEWIC Annual Reports](#) can be viewed on the Species at risk (SAR) public registry.

The complete list of species currently on Schedule 1, or the [List of Wildlife Species at Risk](#), can also be viewed on the SAR public registry.

Species become eligible for addition to Schedule 1 once they have been assessed as being at risk by the COSEWIC. The decision to add a species to Schedule 1 is made by the Governor in Council

further to a recommendation from the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature. The Governor in Council is the formal executive body that gives legal effect to decisions that then have the force of law.

COSEWIC AND THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING SPECIES AT RISK

COSEWIC is recognized under SARA as the authority for assessing the status of wildlife species at risk. COSEWIC comprises experts on wildlife species at risk. Its members have backgrounds in the fields of biology, ecology, genetics, Indigenous traditional knowledge and other relevant fields. They come from various communities, including academia, Indigenous organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations.

COSEWIC gives priority to those species more likely to become extinct, and then commissions a status report for the evaluation of the species status. To be accepted, status reports must be peer-reviewed and approved by a subcommittee of species specialists. In special circumstances, assessments can be done on an emergency basis. When a status report is complete, COSEWIC meets to examine it and discuss the species. COSEWIC then determines whether the species is at risk, and, if so, it then assesses the level of risk and assigns a conservation status.

TERMS USED TO DEFINE THE DEGREE OF RISK TO A SPECIES

The conservation status defines the degree of risk to a species. The terms used under SARA are Extirpated, Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern. Extirpated species are wildlife species that no longer occur in the wild in Canada but still exist elsewhere. Endangered species are wildlife species that are likely to soon become Extirpated or Extinct. Threatened species are likely to become

Endangered if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to their extirpation or extinction. The term Special Concern is used for wildlife species that may become Threatened or Endangered due to a combination of biological characteristics and threats. Once COSEWIC has assessed a species as Extirpated, Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern, it is eligible for inclusion on Schedule 1.

For more information on COSEWIC, visit the [COSEWIC website](#).

TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC SPECIES ELIGIBLE FOR SCHEDULE 1 AMENDMENTS

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans conducts separate consultations for the aquatic species. For more information on the consultations for aquatic species, visit the page on [Aquatic species at risk](#) on the Fisheries and Oceans Canada website.

The Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature is conducting the consultations for all other species at risk.

Species at risk also occur in national parks or other lands administered by Parks Canada; Parks Canada shares responsibility for these species with Environment and Climate Change Canada.

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE'S RESPONSE TO THE COSEWIC ASSESSMENTS: THE RESPONSE STATEMENTS

After COSEWIC has completed its assessment of a species, it provides it to the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature. The Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature then has 90 days to post a response on the Species at Risk Public Registry, known as a response statement. The response statement indicates when the Minister received the assessment and provides information on the scope of any consultations and the timelines for action, to the extent possible. It identifies how long the consultations will be (whether they are "normal" or "extended") by stating when the Minister will forward the assessment to the Governor in Council.

Consultations for a group of species are launched with the posting of their response statements.

COMMENTS SOLICITED ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS OF SCHEDULE 1

The conservation of wildlife is a joint legal responsibility: one that is shared among the governments of Canada. But biodiversity will not be conserved by governments that act alone. The best way to secure the survival of species at risk and their habitats is through the active participation of all those concerned. SARA recognizes this, and that all Indigenous peoples and Canadians have a role to play in preventing the disappearance of wildlife species from our lands. The Government of Canada is inviting and encouraging you to become involved. One way that you can do so is by sharing your comments concerning the addition or reclassification of these terrestrial species.

Your comments are welcome on how the government's decision to list a species under SARA could affect you or your community. Comments will be used to inform the drafting of the Minister's proposed listing recommendations for each of these species. This consultation process is not intended to revisit the scientific assessments conducted by COSEWIC, whose independent evaluations of biological status are complete. However, if you have scientific information that was not considered by COSEWIC during their assessment, this is also welcome.

THE SPECIES AT RISK ACT LISTING PROCESS AND CONSULTATIONS

The addition of a wildlife species at risk to Schedule 1 of SARA facilitates providing for its protection and conservation. To be effective, the listing process must be transparent and open. The species listing process under SARA is summarized in Figure 1.

THE PURPOSE OF CONSULTATIONS ON AMENDMENTS TO THE LIST

When COSEWIC assesses a wildlife species, it does so solely on the basis of the best available information relevant to the biological status of the species. COSEWIC then submits the assessment to the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature, who considers it when making the listing recommendation to the Governor in Council. The purpose of these consultations is to provide the Minister with a better understanding of the potential social and economic impacts of the proposed change to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, and of the potential consequences of not adding a species to the List.

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT OF THE CONSULTATIONS: THE MINISTER'S RECOMMENDATION TO THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL

The comments collected during the consultations inform the Governor in Council's consideration of the Minister's recommendations for listing species at risk. The Minister must recommend one of three courses of action. These are for the Governor in Council to accept the species assessment and modify Schedule 1 accordingly, not to add the species to Schedule 1, or to refer the species assessment back to COSEWIC for its further consideration (Figure 1).

- *Constitution Act*, 1982, s.35, Duty to consult – Under section 35 of the Constitution Act, the federal government has a duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Indigenous communities when government action has the

potential to adversely impact potential or established Aboriginal or treaty rights.

- The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act \(UNDA\)](#) requires Environment and Climate Change to conduct consultations with Indigenous peoples comprehensively and respectfully to fulfill its legal obligations under the Act.

NORMAL AND EXTENDED CONSULTATION PERIODS

Normal consultations meet the consultation needs for the listing of most species at risk. The consultations can last between four and nine months (known respectively as normal and extended consultation paths). Longer consultations may be needed to ensure appropriate consultations. The reasons more time may be needed include, but are not limited to, ensuring appropriate engagement with Indigenous Peoples and conducting complex socioeconomic analyses. Consultations are also required with wildlife management boards, which are authorized under land claims agreements for functions involving a wildlife species.

The extent of consultations needs to be proportional to the expected impact of a listing decision and the time that may be needed to consult. Under some circumstances, whether or not a species will be included on Schedule 1 could have significant and widespread impacts on the activities of some groups of people. It is essential that such stakeholders have the opportunity to inform the pending decision and, to the extent possible, to provide input on its potential

consequences and to share ideas on how best to approach threats to the species. A longer period may also be required to consult appropriately with some groups. For example, consultations can take longer for groups that meet infrequently but that must be engaged on several occasions. For such reasons, extended consultations may be undertaken.

Occasionally, for reasons such as these, the timelines initially set out in a response statement may not be adequate. In such cases, if the Governor in Council does not receive the assessment at the time specified in the response statement, within one month another statement is to be published on the Registry describing the reasons for the delay and setting out next steps.

For both normal and extended consultations, once they are complete, the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature forwards the species assessments to the Governor in Council for the government's formal receipt of the assessment. The Governor in Council then has nine months to come to a listing decision.

The consultation paths (normal or extended) for the terrestrial species eligible for an Amendment to Schedule 1 are announced when the Minister publishes the response statements.

No consultations are undertaken for species already on Schedule 1 and for which no change in status is being proposed.

FIGURE 1: THE SPECIES LISTING PROCESS UNDER SARA

1	The Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature receives species assessments from COSEWIC at least once per year.
2	The competent departments undertake an internal review to determine the extent of public consultations and socio-economic analysis necessary to inform the listing decision.
3	Within 90 days of receipt of the species assessments prepared by COSEWIC, the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature publishes response statements on the Species at Risk Public Registry that indicates how he or she intends to respond to each assessment and, to the extent possible, provides timelines for action.
4	Where appropriate, the competent departments undertake consultations, and any other relevant analysis needed to prepare the advice for the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature.
5	The Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature forwards the assessments to the Governor in Council for receipt. This generally occurs within twelve months of posting the response statements, unless further consultations are necessary.
6	Within nine months of receiving the assessments, the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature, may decide whether or not to list the species under Schedule 1 of SARA or refer the assessments back to COSEWIC for further information or consideration.
7	Once a species is added to Schedule 1, it benefits from the applicable provisions of SARA.

WHO IS CONSULTED, AND HOW

It is most important to consult with those who would be most affected by the proposed changes. There is protection that is immediately in place when a species that is Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened is added to Schedule 1 (for more details, see below, “Protection for listed Extirpated, Endangered and Threatened species”). This immediate protection does not apply to species of Special Concern. The nature of the protection depends on the type of species, its conservation status, and where the species is found. Environment and Climate Change Canada takes this into account during the consultations; those who may be affected by the impacts of the automatic protections are contacted directly, and others are encouraged to contribute through a variety of approaches.

Indigenous peoples known to have species at risk on their lands, for which changes to Schedule 1 are being considered, will be contacted. Their engagement is of particular significance, acknowledging their role in the management of the extensive traditional territories and reserve and settlement lands.

A Wildlife Management Board is a group that has been established under a land claims agreement and is authorized by the agreement to perform functions in respect of wildlife species. Some eligible species at risk are found on lands where existing land claims agreements apply, that give specific authority to a Wildlife Management Board. In such cases, the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature will consult with the relevant board.

To encourage others to contribute and make the necessary information readily available, this document is distributed to known stakeholders and posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry. More extensive consultations may also be done through regional or community meetings or through a more targeted approach.

Environment and Climate Change Canada also sends notice of the consultations to identified

concerned groups and individuals who have made their interests known. These include, but are not limited to, industries, resource users, landowners and environmental non-governmental organizations.

In most cases, it is difficult for Environment and Climate Change Canada to fully examine the potential impacts of recovery actions when species are being considered for listing. Recovery actions for terrestrial species usually have not yet been comprehensively defined at the time of listing, so their impact cannot be fully understood. Once they are better understood, efforts are made to minimize adverse social and economic impacts of listing and to maximize the benefits. SARA requires that recovery measures be prepared in consultation with those considered to be directly affected by them.

In addition to the public, Environment and Climate Change Canada consults on listing with the governments of the provinces and territories with lead responsibility for the conservation and management of these wildlife species. Environment and Climate Change Canada also consults with other federal departments and agencies.

ROLE AND IMPACT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS IN THE LISTING PROCESS

The results of the public consultations are of great significance to informing the process of listing species at risk. Environment and Climate Change Canada carefully reviews the comments it receives to gain a better understanding of the benefits and costs of changing the List.

The comments are then used to inform the Minister’s recommendation to the Governor in Council. The Governor in Council can decide either to accept the species assessment and amend Schedule 1 accordingly; or not to add the species to Schedule 1; or to refer the species assessment back to COSEWIC for further information or consideration.

The Government of Canada also recognizes that the absence of full scientific certainty is not a reason to postpone decisions to protect the environment.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ADDITION OF A SPECIES TO SCHEDULE 1

The protection that comes into effect following the addition of a species to Schedule 1 depends upon a number of factors. These include the species' status under SARA, the type of species and where it occurs.

PROTECTION FOR LISTED EXTIRPATED, ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

Responsibility for the conservation of wildlife is shared among the governments of Canada. SARA establishes legal protection for individuals as soon as a species is listed as Threatened, Endangered or Extirpated, and, in the case of Threatened and Endangered species, for their residences. This applies to species considered federal species or that are found on federal lands.

Federal species include migratory birds, as defined by the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*, and aquatic species covered by the *Fisheries Act*. Federal land means land that belongs to the federal government, and the internal waters and territorial sea of Canada. It also means land set apart for the use and benefit of a band under the *Indian Act* (such as reserves). In the territories, the protection for species at risk on federal lands applies only where they are on lands under the authority of the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature or the Parks Canada Agency.

Migratory birds are protected by the *Migratory Birds Regulations* under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*, which strictly prohibits the harming of migratory birds and the disturbance or destruction of their nests and eggs. For more information, please refer to the [Migratory Birds Regulations](#) for the complete list of prohibitions.

SARA's protection for individuals makes it an offence to kill, harm, harass, capture or take an individual of a species listed as Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened. It is also an offence to damage or destroy the residence of one or more

individuals of an Endangered or Threatened species or an Extirpated species whose reintroduction has been recommended by a recovery strategy. The Act also makes it an offence to possess, collect, buy, sell or trade an individual of a species that is Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened.

Species at risk that are neither aquatic nor protected under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*, nor on federal lands, do not receive immediate protection upon listing under SARA. Instead, in most cases, the protection of terrestrial species on non-federal lands is the responsibility of the provinces and territories where they are found. The application of protections under SARA to a species at risk on non-federal lands requires that the Governor in Council make an order defining those lands. This can only occur when the Minister is of the opinion that the laws of the province or territory do not effectively protect the species or its critical habitat. To put such an order in place, the Minister would then need to recommend the order be made to the Governor in Council. If the Governor in Council agrees to make the order, the prohibitions of SARA would then apply to the provincial or territorial lands specified by the order. The federal government would consult before making such an order.

The Governor in Council may also make an emergency order to provide for the protection of a listed wildlife species under section 80 of SARA, which can apply to federal, provincial and privately held lands. Emergency orders may identify habitat that is necessary for the survival or recovery of the species and include provisions prohibiting activities

that may adversely affect the species and that habitat.

RECOVERY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS FOR EXTIRPATED, ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

Recovery planning results in the development of recovery strategies and action plans for Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened species. It involves the different levels of government responsible for the management of the species, depending on what type of species it is and where it occurs. These include federal, provincial and territorial governments as well as Wildlife Management Boards. Recovery strategies and action plans are also prepared in cooperation with directly affected Indigenous organizations. Landowners and other stakeholders directly affected by a recovery strategy are consulted to the extent possible.

Recovery strategies must be prepared for all Extirpated, Endangered and Threatened species. They include measures to mitigate the known threats to a species and its habitat and set the population and distribution objectives. Other objectives can be included, such as stewardship, to conserve the species, or education, to increase public awareness. Recovery strategies must include a statement of the time frame for the development of one or more action plans that will state the measures necessary to implement the recovery strategy. To the extent possible, recovery strategies must also identify the critical habitat of the species, which is the habitat necessary for the survival or recovery of the species. If there is not enough information available to identify critical habitat, the recovery strategies include a schedule of studies required for its identification. This schedule outlines what must be done to obtain the necessary information and by when it needs to be done. In such cases, critical habitat can be identified in a subsequent action plan.

Proposed recovery strategies for newly listed species are posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry to provide for public review and comments. For Endangered species, proposed recovery strategies are posted within one year of

their addition to Schedule 1, and for Threatened or Extirpated species, within two years.

Once a recovery strategy has been posted as final, one or more action plans based on the recovery strategy must then be prepared. These include measures to address threats and achieve the population and distribution objectives. Action plans also complete the identification of the critical habitat where necessary and, to the extent possible, state measures that are proposed to protect it. Once critical habitat is identified in a recovery strategy or action plan the Act provides for steps to be taken for its protection.

PERMITS AND AGREEMENTS

For terrestrial species listed on Schedule 1 as Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened, the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature may authorize exceptions to the Act's prohibitions, when and where they apply. The Minister can enter into agreements or issue permits only for one of three purposes: for research, for conservation activities, or if the effects to the species are incidental to the activity. Research must relate to the conservation of a species and be conducted by qualified scientists. Conservation activities must benefit a listed species or be required to enhance its chances of survival. All activities, including those that incidentally affect a listed species, its individuals, residences or critical habitat must also meet certain conditions. First, it must be established that all reasonable alternatives to the activity have been considered and the best solution has been adopted. Second, it must also be established that all feasible measures will be taken to minimize the impact of the activity on the listed species. Finally, it must be established that the activity will not jeopardize the survival or recovery of the species. Having issued a permit or agreement, the Minister must then include an explanation on the Species at Risk Public Registry of why the permit or agreement was issued.

PROTECTION FOR LISTED SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

While immediate protection under SARA for species listed as Extirpated, Endangered and Threatened does not apply to species listed as

Special Concern, any existing protections and prohibitions, such as those provided by the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* or the *Canada National Parks Act*, continue to be in force.

MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

For species of Special Concern, management plans are to be prepared and made available on the Species at Risk Public Registry within three years of a species' addition to Schedule 1, allowing for public review and comments. Management plans include appropriate conservation measures for the species and for its habitat. They are prepared in cooperation with the jurisdictions responsible for the management of the species, including directly affected Wildlife Management Boards and Indigenous organizations. Landowners, lessees and others directly affected by a

management plan will also be consulted to the extent possible.

PROVIDING COMMENTS

The involvement of Canadians is integral to the listing process, as it is to the ultimate protection of Canadian wildlife. Your comments matter and are given serious consideration. ECCC will review all the comments that it receives by the deadlines provided in consultation materials. Your feedback at the listing stage on potential social, economic, and operational impacts throughout the SARA lifecycle is appreciated.

For any information on the *Species at Risk Act*, please visit the [Species at risk public registry website](#).

GLOSSARY

Aquatic species: A wildlife species that is a fish as defined in section 2 of the *Fisheries Act* or a marine plant as defined in section 47 of the Act. The term includes marine mammals.

Canada Gazette: The Canada Gazette is one of the vehicles that Canadians can use to access laws and regulations. It has been the “official newspaper” of the Government of Canada since 1841. Government departments and agencies as well as the private sector are required by law to publish certain information in the Canada Gazette. Notices and proposed regulations are published in the Canada Gazette, Part I, and official regulations are published in the Canada Gazette, Part II. For more information, please visit the [Canada Gazette website](#).

Canadian Endangered Species

Conservation Council: The Council is made up of federal, provincial and territorial ministers with responsibilities for wildlife species. The Council’s mandate is to provide national leadership and coordination for the protection of species at risk.

COSEWIC: The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. The Committee comprises experts on wildlife species at risk. Their backgrounds are in the fields of biology, ecology, genetics, Indigenous traditional knowledge and other relevant fields. These experts come from various communities, including, among others, government and academia.

COSEWIC assessment: COSEWIC’s assessment or re-assessment of the status of a wildlife species, based on a status report on the species that COSEWIC either has had prepared or has received with an application.

Critical habitat: The habitat that is necessary for the survival or recovery of a listed wildlife species and that is identified as the species’ critical habitat in the recovery strategy or in an action plan for the species.

Down-listing: A revision of the status of a species on Schedule 1 to a status of lower risk.

Federal land: Any land owned by the federal government, the internal waters and territorial sea of Canada, and reserves and other land set apart for the use and benefit of a band under the *Indian Act*.

Governor in Council: The Governor General of Canada acting on the advice of the King’s Privy Council for Canada, the formal executive body that gives legal effect to those decisions of Cabinet that are to have the force of law.

Individual: An individual of a wildlife species, whether living or dead, at any developmental stage, and includes larvae, embryos, eggs, sperm, seeds, pollen, spores and asexual propagules.

Order: An order issued by the Governor in Council, either on the basis of authority delegated by legislation or by virtue of the prerogative powers of the Crown.

Response statement: A document in which the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature indicates how he or she intends to respond to the COSEWIC assessment of a wildlife species. A response statement is posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry within 90 days of receipt of the assessment by the Minister, and provides timelines for action to the extent possible.

Species at Risk Public Registry:

Developed as an online service, the [Species at Risk \(SAR\) public registry](#) has been accessible to the public since the proclamation of the *Species at*

Risk Act (SARA). The website gives users easy access to documents and information related to SARA at any time and location with Internet access.

Schedule 1: A schedule of SARA, also known as the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, which presents the list of species protected under SARA.

Up-listing: A revision of the status of a species on Schedule 1 to a status of higher risk.

Wildlife Management Board: Established under the land claims agreements in northern Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon,

Northwest Territories, British Columbia, and Nunavut, Wildlife Management Boards are the “main instruments of wildlife management” within their settlement areas. In this role, Wildlife Management Boards not only establish, modify and remove levels of total allowable harvest of a variety of wildlife species, but also participate in research activities, including annual harvest studies, and approve the designation of species at risk in their settlement areas.

Wildlife Species: Under SARA, a species, subspecies, variety, or geographically or genetically distinct population of animal, plant or other organism, other than a bacterium or virus. To be eligible for inclusion under SARA, a wildlife species must be wild by nature and native to Canada. Non-native species that have been here for 50 years or more can be considered eligible if they came without human intervention.