# Report on the Progress Towards the Implementation of the Management Plan for the Mountain Sucker (*Catostomus platyrhynchus*), Pacific populations for the Period of 2021 to 2025



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For copies of the recovery document, or for additional information on species at risk, including Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) status report, and other related documents, please visit the Species at Risk Public Registry.

**Cover photo**: Photo of Mountain Sucker by © Mike Pearson/Pearson Ecological

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# Preface

The *Species at Risk Act* (S.C. 2002, c.29) (SARA) requires the competent minister(s) to monitor and report on the implementation of recovery documents (that is, recovery strategies, action plans, and management plans) for species at risk. These reports must describe the progress made towards the species' recovery or conservation[1].

The Minister of Fisheries is the competent minister for aquatic species at risk. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has prepared this progress report.

Reporting on the progress toward implementing recovery documents includes reporting on the collective efforts of the competent minister(s), provincial and territorial governments, and all other parties involved in carrying out actions that contribute to the species' recovery or conservation.

As stated in the preamble to SARA, success in the recovery and conservation of species at risk depends on the commitment and cooperation of many contributors, and will not be achieved by DFO, or any other jurisdiction, alone. All Canadians are invited to join in supporting and implementing the recovery documents, for the benefit of the species and Canadian society as a whole.

# Acknowledgements

This progress report was prepared by Alaina Dowling, Carrie Kwok, Maggie Boothroyd, and Oliver Barker of DFO's Species at Risk Program, with input from Scott Gilmore of DFO Science, and the Government of British Columbia. The progress toward species conservation described in this report would not have been achieved without the partnerships and contributions of many individuals and organizations.

[1]"Recovery" applies to species listed under SARA as threatened, endangered or extirpated, which require a recovery strategy and one or more action plan(s). "Conservation" applies to species listed under SARA as special concern, which require a management plan.

# Executive summary

This report summarizes the progress made by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and its partners towards implementing the management plan for the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, during the period 2021 and 2025. During the reporting period, progress was made toward 2 of the 4 broad strategies, including resolving knowledge gaps on species' distribution, taxonomy, and threats through verifying historical records, environmental DNA surveys, and research to assess cumulative effects. However, the status of the management objective could not be assessed due to remaining information gaps.

For more information on the contents of this document, please contact the Species at Risk Program (DFO.PACSAR-LEPPAC.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca).

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# 1 Introduction

SPECIAL CONCERN



Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations
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Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and its partners have made progress towards the implementation of the conservation measures identified in the "Management Plan for the Mountain Sucker (*Catostomus platyrhynchus*), Pacific populations, in Canada" (DFO 2020), through the actions undertaken between February 2021 and February 2025, to support the conservation of the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations[2]. The management plan provides detailed information on the species, its threats, its needs, management objectives, and conservation measures.

This progress report is part of a series of documents for this species that should be taken into consideration together, including the management plan. Refer to the species profile for Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, on the Species at Risk Public Registry for more information and related documents.

# 2 Progress towards meeting the management objectives for the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations

Management objectives establish, to the extent possible, the conditions that are necessary for the conservation of the species. The management objective for the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, is to:

- maintain self-sustaining populations throughout their current distribution to ensure the species' long-term viability in the wild

Four broad strategies were identified in the management plan to meet the management objective for the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations. During the reporting period, conservation actions were undertaken by DFO and its partners under 2 broad strategies. Some key achievements are described below.

[2] The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada's 2022 reassessment of the Mountain Sucker species complex updated the name of the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, designatable unit to Cordilleran Sucker (*Pantosteus bondi*). This progress report uses Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, in accordance with Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*.

### Broad strategy 1: inventory and monitoring

- review and verification of historical occurrence records (including museum specimens and databases) identified widespread errors in species identification, resulting in a refined understanding of the species' distribution (Gilmore et al. 2026)
- environmental DNA (eDNA) metabarcoding[3] surveys yielded positive detections in the Fraser and North Thompson watersheds where Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, was historically reported, and demonstrated eDNA metabarcoding is an effective tool for detecting the species (Gilmore et al. 2026)

### Broad strategy 2: research

- as part of the 2022 reassessment, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) incorporated new genetic research revealing the fish formerly identified as Mountain Sucker comprised 2 distinct species. As a result, the Pacific populations were re-classified as Cordilleran Sucker (*Pantosteus bondi*; COSEWIC 2022)
- a cumulative effects assessment of at-risk species in the Fraser Valley found that riparian disturbance, sedimentation, and pollution had the highest threat scores for Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations (Boyd et al. 2022)
- a subsequent geospatial analysis was developed to assess cumulative threats to fish and fish habitat across the Fraser River Basin, and found that cumulative climate-related threats may pose a greater risk to Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, than cumulative human activity and landscape disturbance-based threats (DFO 2024)

### Broad strategy 3: management and coordination

- no action was taken on this broad strategy during the reporting period

### Broad strategy 4: stewardship and outreach

- no action was taken on this broad strategy during the reporting period

Achievement of the management objective is evaluated using performance indicators. Table 1 provides an overview of the status of performance indicators as of the end of

[3] eDNA is genetic material shed by organisms into their environment, such as water. eDNA metabarcoding is a method that analyzes this genetic material in environmental samples to detect and identify many species at once.

the reporting period. Performance indicators that were partially met or not met are discussed in the “Knowledge gaps and future priorities” section below.

**Table 1: Status of performance indicators for Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, for the period February 2021 to February 2025.**

| Performance indicator | Status[4] |
|---|---|
| Observe a stable or positive population abundance | Not met |
| Observe a preservation or expansion of distribution, taking into account natural variation | Partially met, underway |

# 3 Key gaps and future priorities for the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations

During the reporting period (February 2021 to February 2025), activities were conducted to support 2 of the 4 broad strategies identified in the management plan. There is not enough information to assess the status of the management objective, as 1 performance indicator was not met and the second is only partially met. Priority next steps include, but are not limited to:

- developing and implementing a population monitoring plan to assess performance indicators and measure progress towards achieving the management objective
- advancing knowledge of life history traits and habitat requirements to better understand how threats affect Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations
- developing and distributing educational outreach materials for the general public, industry, and land owners to foster awareness and conservation of Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations
- encouraging land owners, industry, and relevant levels of government to consider the species and its threats in the development, implementation, and updating of land use plans, water licenses, official community plans, by-laws, and management guidelines

[4]**Met**: the performance indicator has been met and no further action is required
**Met, ongoing**: the performance indicator has been met, but efforts will continue until such time the population is considered to be recovered
**Not met**: the performance indicator has not been met, and little to no progress has been made
**Partially met, underway**: the performance indicator has not been met, but there has been moderate to significant progress made

# 4 Concluding statement

During the reporting period, progress was made toward implementing the conservation measures and broad strategies identified in the management plan for the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations. Progress was made toward 2 of the 4 broad strategies. However, the status of the management objective could not be assessed due to remaining information gaps. Progress to date includes resolving knowledge gaps on distribution, taxonomy, and threats through verifying historical records, environmental DNA surveys, and research to assess cumulative effects. Priority next steps include continued monitoring, further research on threats, and strengthened stewardship through outreach and integration of species considerations into land and water management decisions.

DFO remains committed to the conservation of all aquatic species at risk. The work that has been initiated and completed to date has built a strong foundation for the continued management of the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations. DFO and its partners will continue to work towards the achievement of the management objectives for the Mountain Sucker, Pacific populations, and welcome the participation of additional partners.

# 5 References

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