



A Promise for Recovery: Westslope Cutthroat Trout Action Plan

May 16, 2019

Conservation groups are acknowledging the federal government for the long overdue release of a draft plan to recover westslope cutthroat trout in Alberta. The plan would significantly increase the amount of habitat protected for this threatened species.

“This plan recognizes that westslope cutthroat trout depend on cold and clean water from healthy watersheds, by expanding their critical habitat to include upstream creek channels and riparian areas,” said Joanna Skrajny, Alberta Wilderness Association Conservation Specialist. “This is just the beginning of what westslope cutthroat trout need to survive and recover, it’s encouraging to see the plan also recognize that more habitat protection is needed.”

Dave Mayhood, an aquatic ecologist and President of Timberwolf Wilderness Society added, “This new document marks a significant advance over the previous recovery strategy. It now understands that upstream and terrestrial connections are part of critical habitat. It better identifies the true extent of remnant populations based on better science. But it fails to fully recognize the entire catchment as critical habitat, and fails to accept well-established population targets needed to recover the species. We’ll be pushing hard for these and several other improvements during the comment period.”

“This plan was supposed to have been completed 4 years ago. During this time, we have continued to witness the degradation of westslope cutthroat trout populations and habitat,” said Lesley Peterson, Provincial Biologist with Trout

Unlimited Canada. “This plan is critical as it helps organizations such as Trout Unlimited to work with the government and take concrete action on westslope cutthroat trout recovery.”

Westslope cutthroat trout in Alberta were formally assessed as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in 2006, listed as ‘Threatened’ in 2009 provincially and March 2013 federally. A provincial recovery plan was issued in 2013, with the final federal recovery strategy published in 2014. The federal deadline to produce an action plan was March 31, 2015.

In March of this year, Timberwolf applied to Federal Court for a judicial review of the prolonged failure of the Fisheries Minister to issue the action plan required under the Species At Risk Act. In mid-April, it agreed to an abeyance of proceedings until May 17 based on an undertaking by the Minister to release the plan forthwith. Timberwolf will now withdraw its lawsuit.

The proposed [Recovery Strategy and Action Plan for Alberta Populations of Westslope Cutthroat Trout](#) is open for public consultation until July 13, 2019.

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