

SUMMARY OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT (ALBERTA POPULATIONS)

1. Opening Statement

The *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) requires the development of one or more action plans based on the recovery strategy for those species listed as endangered or threatened on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk (Schedule 1). The Westslope Cutthroat Trout (Alberta populations) is among those species listed as Threatened under the SARA. In March 2014, Fisheries and Oceans Canada posted the Recovery Strategy for the Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*), Alberta Populations in Canada, which sets out the goals, objectives and approaches for recovering the species, and the timelines for completion of the action plan. In accordance with the recovery strategy, an action plan for Westslope Cutthroat Trout was due for posting on the Species at Risk Public Registry by March 31, 2015, for a 60-day public comment period.

A decision was made by Fisheries and Oceans Canada to develop a document which combines an amended recovery strategy and an action plan; hereafter referred to as the 'recovery strategy-action plan', rather than a stand-alone action plan, that would meet the requirements of both a recovery strategy and an action plan under the SARA. The recovery strategy-action plan will replace the existing recovery strategy and will provide the strategic direction for the recovery of the species, including the detailed recovery measures, and it will outline what is required to achieve the objectives. Amendments to the existing recovery strategy will include revisions to Section 5 (Critical Habitat) and Section 7 (Activities Permitted by the Recovery Strategy). Delaying the completion of this document has allowed Fisheries and Oceans Canada to include the most thorough and up-to-date genetic information on Westslope Cutthroat Trout which will be used to identify additional critical habitat in Section 5. Section 7 will be revised to align with current angling regulations under the *Alberta Fishery Regulations*, 1998, SOR/98-246.

2. Summary

2.1 Scope of the Action Plan

The action plan portion of this document will provide the detailed recovery planning that supports the strategic direction set out in the recovery strategy section of the document. The plan will outline recovery measures to be taken by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and/or other jurisdictions and/or organizations to help achieve the population and distribution objectives identified in the recovery strategy. The Parks Canada Agency is developing a multi-species action plan for Banff National Park, which will outline recovery measures for multiple species at risk, including Westslope Cutthroat Trout.

The recovery strategy-action plan addresses the population and distribution objectives of protecting and maintaining the existing ≥ 0.99 pure populations at self-sustaining levels and re-establishing additional pure populations to self-sustaining levels, within the species original

distribution in Alberta. Key approaches to address the objectives will be to: identify and protect critical habitat for the remaining pure populations, improve knowledge of population genetics, size, distribution, and trends, identify opportunities to help recover pure and near-pure populations, increase education and awareness of the species for their conservation, re-establish pure populations in sites within the original Westslope Cutthroat Trout distribution and determine the role that introduced pure Westslope Cutthroat Trout may play in the recovery effort.

The action plan portion of the document will outline measures that provide the best chance of achieving the population and distribution objectives for the species, including the measures to be taken to address the threats and monitor the recovery of the species, under the strategies and approaches outlined in the recovery strategy.

2.2 Critical Habitat

Critical habitat was identified in the Recovery Strategy for Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*), Alberta Populations in Canada (2014). The recovery strategy-action plan will propose additional critical habitat and will contain a revised description of the species' critical habitat.

2.3 Actions to Achieve Recovery Objectives

To help achieve the population and distribution objectives, four broad strategies will be proposed: research, monitoring, management and regulatory actions, and education and outreach. Within each of these, a number of approaches will be outlined with the aim to protect and manage the species and to reduce or eliminate threats to its survival.

The federal recovery strategy-action plan will adopt the provincial Alberta Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan 2012-2017, which addresses all the recommended actions to address the population and distribution objectives. The implementation schedule in Section 9 of the provincial recovery plan prioritizes the actions, links them to objectives and identifies the lead agency for each action. The recovery plan identified a timeframe for the recovery actions in order to demonstrate costs associated with the action; it does not indicate the conclusion of the recovery actions. To date, many of the actions listed in the implantation table have been completed or are ongoing. Implementation of recovery actions has, and will continue to occur throughout the development of the recovery strategy-action plan.