

Aquatic Species at Risk



Information Summary for Consultations on the Proposed Listing of Brook Floater (*Alasmidonta varicosa*) as “Special Concern” Under the *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*

As part of its regulatory consultation process, the Government of Canada would like to hear your comments on the potential impacts of listing the Brook Floater (*Alasmidonta varicosa*), as “special concern” under the *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has prepared this summary on the state of the Brook Floater in Atlantic Canada to help inform you.

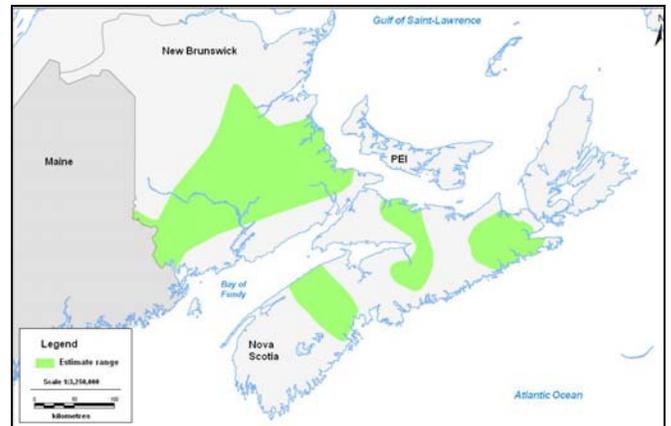
What is the *Species at Risk Act*?

As part of its strategy for the protection of species at risk, the Government of Canada proclaimed the *Species at Risk Act (SARA)* in 2003. One of the purposes of the SARA is to provide for the legal protection of wildlife species and the conservation of biological diversity. 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 the scientific evidence, the comments received from Canadians during consultations, and the potential socio-economic impacts before making a decision whether or not to include the species on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under the SARA. Recovery planning is undertaken for all listed species, and prohibitions are put in place protecting species assessed as extinct, extirpated, endangered or threatened, from being harmed. Species of special concern are not subject to the same prohibitions.



About the Brook Floater

The Brook Floater is a freshwater mussel approximately 50-65 mm long. It has a thin, yellowish, greenish or brownish to black shell, often with broad dark rays running from the top to bottom. The Brook Floater is distributed in eastern North America from northeastern Georgia through the eastern USA to central Nova Scotia and the southern half of New Brunswick. Its habitat includes shallow rivers or streams with moderate to high water flows and it prefers sand or fine gravel substrates. The Canadian population represents an important global stronghold for the species as half of its USA locations have disappeared.



Estimated Canadian Range of the Brook Floater

Proposed SARA Status: “Special Concern”

The level of protection and recovery actions undertaken for a species listed under SARA depends on its assessed level of risk for extinction. The Brook Floater has been assessed by COSEWIC as a species of “special concern”. This is the lowest level of risk category and indicates that this species is not presently endangered, but is considered to be sensitive to human activities and natural events due to biological factors and/or threats. The Brook Floater was designated “special concern” because it is found in only 15 widely scattered watersheds in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This freshwater mussel’s habitat is vulnerable to various land-based activities (see below).





Threats to the Species

The major threat to the Brook Floater is aquatic habitat degradation as a result of agricultural, forestry or land management practices. Silt, nutrients, sewage loads, damage to the riparian and aquatic habitats and water level fluctuations can alter its habitat. An increase in residential and cottage developments near rivers is also a potential threat to the Brook Floater population.

Special Significance to Aboriginal Peoples

It is not known if any Aboriginal or community traditional knowledge on these freshwater mussels has been collected at this time and if Brook Floater has any historical significance to Aboriginal peoples or their communities. However, it is not currently used for food, social, or ceremonial fisheries.

Protection and Recovery of Species under the SARA

If Brook Floater is added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk as a species of “special concern”, it will not be subject to prohibitions under the SARA; however DFO will be required to produce a SAR Management Plan for the species in an effort to ensure that it does not become endangered due to human activity. A SAR Management Plan will include conservation measures for the species and set goals and objectives for maintaining sustainable population levels.

Possible Management Measures if Listed Under SARA

If the Brook Floater is listed under SARA, DFO will, in collaboration and consultation with interested parties, use the best available information to develop a Management Plan for the Brook Floater. A Management Plan for this species could include mitigation measures to reduce sedimentation in watercourses, measures to restore or improve fish habitat, best management practices along with watercourses monitoring programs.

Potential Socio-Economic Implications

The potential socio-economic implications of the proposed listing of Brook Floater as Special Concern under SARA are unknown but assumed to be of minimal cost to Canadian Society. There may be potential ecological benefits that could arise as a result of protecting the Brook Floater.

The Consultation Process – Your Comments

As part of the consultation process, the Government of Canada would like to hear your opinion on listing Brook Floater as “special concern” under the SARA, such as comments on the potential positive and negative impacts this listing would have on you, your industry, and/or the ecosystem. Your answers to the following questions will be used to help inform the decision whether or not to list the species under the SARA:

1. How would your activities be affected if Brook Floater was listed as “special concern” under SARA? In other words, are there environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts (positive and/or negative) to you personally or to the group you represent, with listing this species under the SARA?
2. Please explain the main reasons why you do or do not support listing Brook Floater as “special concern” on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under SARA.
3. Please indicate if you represent an industry, community, Aboriginal community or organization and if you are presenting your comments on their behalf or as an individual.
4. In which province do you reside?

To submit answers to the above questions, share your comments, or to receive further information about this species, please contact:

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For a copy of the COSEWIC assessment for this species, or for other general inquiries, please visit the SARA Public Registry at www.sararegistry.gc.ca.

SARA Public Registry
www.sararegistry.gc.ca

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1-866-266-6603
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Aquatic Species at Risk Web Site:
www.aquaticspeciesatrisk.gc.ca

Environment Canada
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Environment Canada Species at Risk Website :
<http://www.ec.gc.ca/nature/default.asp?lang=En&n=FB5A4CA8-1>

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Parks Canada Species at Risk Website:
<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/nature/ep-sar/index.aspx>

Photo Credit: Jeffrey Domm

Map Credit : Stantec. 2009. Draft Recovery Potential Assessment of Brook Floater (*Alasmidonta varicosa*). 32pp