

# Response Statement - Steelhead Trout, Chilcotin River population

*April 9, 2018*

**Common Name:** Steelhead Trout, Chilcotin River population

**Scientific Name:** *Oncorhynchus mykiss*

**Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) Emergency Assessment Subcommittee:** Endangered

**How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment:** If the Minister is of the opinion that there is an imminent threat to the survival of the Steelhead Trout (Chilcotin River population), the Minister will, after consultation with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, on an emergency basis, make a recommendation to the Governor in Council that it be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as an Endangered species.

**Reason(s) for designation provided by COSEWIC:** This wildlife species faces a number of threats, including declining habitat quality both in marine and freshwater environments, and bycatch mortality from Pacific salmon fisheries. The population has declined dramatically (81%) over the last three generations and it is now the lowest on record. The number of spawning fish was high and variable with little trend prior to 2000. The 58 mature fish observed in the most recent survey are only 5% of the pre-2000 mean. If the current rate of decline persists for another three generations, the number of spawning fish will decline to 11, which is 0.9% of the pre-2000 abundance.

**Occurrence:** British Columbia, Pacific Ocean

**Competent Minister(s):** Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

**Applicable federal legislation:** Protected under the Fisheries Protection and Pollution Prevention provisions of the *Fisheries Act*.

**Conservation activities underway:** Interior Fraser River Steelhead, which includes the Chilcotin River population, has been identified as a stock of concern in the Southern BC Salmon Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for a number of years. To reduce the incidental impact of salmon fisheries on this stock, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has adjusted the timing of Fraser River commercial gillnet openings to protect at least 80% of Interior Fraser River Steelhead migration, and coast-wide measures have been broadly implemented, such as gear modifications and mandatory release of incidentally caught steelhead. Further management measures to protect Chilcotin River Steelhead are currently being identified for the 2018 salmon fishery and will be developed in consultation with the Province of BC, First Nations, and stakeholders.

Freshwater recreational fisheries are managed through delegated authority by the Province of British Columbia, which has developed the [Provincial Framework for Steelhead Management in British Columbia](#) to guide its activities. The Province manages Chilcotin River Steelhead as a catch-and-release fishery, and implements restrictions and closures as necessary to conserve the stock.