

Committee on the Status of Species at Risk (COSSAR) 2022-2023 Annual Report



Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development
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Message from Chair

Dear members and stakeholders,

It is my pleasure to present to you our annual report for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. The purpose of the New Brunswick *Species at Risk Act* is to prevent species from being extirpated (locally extinct) from the province due to human causes. The most fundamental process that begins the road to recovery for any species at risk is determining its' risk of extirpation and listing accordingly. The Committee on the Status of Species at Risk plays a critical role in that process – ensuring that the best available science and aboriginal knowledge are used to assess the status of a species. It has been an exceptionally busy year for the committee, with three meetings resulting in the assessment of ten species. I would like to thank our members and staff for the incredible amount of effort they put into these assessments.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Norfolk".

Chris Norfolk, RPF

Mandate

The mandate of the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk (COSSAR) is to provide scientific input, advice, and expertise on any matter relating to the biological assessment of Species at Risk in New Brunswick.

Committee membership

COSSAR was composed of the following members as of March 31, 2023.

1. Chris Norfolk, non-voting Chair of the Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development (DNRED)
2. Connie Browne, Member (Environmental Biology and Ecology)
3. Donald McAlpine, Member (Zoology)
4. Graham Forbes, Member (Environmental Studies)
5. René Malenfant, Member (Systematics and Evolution)
6. Rob Johns, Member (Biology)
7. Sean Blaney, Member (Botany)
8. Steve Ginnish, Member (Mi'kmaq Traditional Knowledge)
9. Mary Sabine, non-voting Representative (DNRED)
10. Erin Whidden, non-voting Representative (DNRED)
11. Hubert Askanas, non-voting Administrative (DNRED)

COSSAR performs the following functions:

- (1)** Assess the biological status of each wildlife species considered by the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development (Minister) to be at risk. These include:
 - (i) species that have been designated by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as Extirpated, Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern;
 - (ii) species identified by the Minister as likely at risk, which may be based on the advice provided by COSSAR for the prioritization of candidate species as described in (4); and
 - (iii) species listed under the emergency listing provision under section 19 in the New Brunswick *Species at Risk Act*, or section 29 of the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

The Minister has sole authority in submitting status reports to COSSAR. Unsolicited reports will not be accepted.

- (2)** In assessing a species, COSSAR will determine if the status report is acceptable in relation to criteria referred to in (3). If the report is acceptable, COSSAR will:
 - (i) classify the wildlife species as an extirpated species, an endangered species, a threatened species, or a species of special concern;
 - (ii) indicate that COSSAR does not have sufficient information to classify the wildlife species; or
 - (iii) indicate that the wildlife species is not currently at risk.
- (3)** Develop, adopt, and periodically review criteria, adapted for the province and based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and COSEWIC criteria, for assessing and classifying the status of wildlife species.

- (4) Provide advice to the Minister respecting the identification and prioritization of wildlife species for assessment, based on criteria and guidelines developed by COSEWIC.
- (5) Review the classification of each species at risk at least once every 10 years or at any time COSSAR believes the biological status of the species at risk has changed significantly.
- (6) Provide advice to the Minister on any matter related to the assessment of species at risk that COSSAR considers appropriate.
- (7) Provide advice to the Minister related to the assessment of wildlife species on any matter submitted to COSSAR by the Minister.
- (8) Reassess a species if the Minister has received further scientific information that was not provided to COSSAR as part of the original status report, and the matter is referred back to COSSAR by the Minister.
- (9) Act without delay in assessing species that have received emergency designation as an endangered species.

Legislation, policies, and by-laws

COSSAR is governed by the *Species at Risk Act* and guided by its' Terms of Reference.

- COSSAR shall make decisions on the status of a New Brunswick wildlife species by consensus. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, a majority vote of the quorum of the voting members present at the meeting constitutes the decision of the committee. A minimum of two-thirds of the voting members must be present, to constitute a quorum.
- COSSAR members should declare any personal or financial conflict of interest that may arise from a status being given to a taxon considered by COSSAR.
- COSSAR members shall perform their functions in an independent manner and not as representatives of their employers or of any other person or body.
- COSSAR is guided by the 'precautionary approach'. COSSAR's decisions will be guided by the best available information on the biological status of a species, including scientific knowledge, community knowledge, and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge, but decisions should not be postponed for lack of full certainty.
- COSSAR is intended to function in a transparent manner. As such, the names of the COSSAR members will be published on the Government of New Brunswick website, as well as any assessments on the biological status of wildlife species and reasons for designation, which can be found on the Species at Risk [public registry](#).
- COSSAR shall provide the Minister with the assessment of the biological status of a wildlife species and the reasons for it (based on the status report provided by the Minister) or report on the deficiencies of a status report (if the status report is found to be unacceptable by members) and provide minutes of each meeting.

Activities and Metrics (Key Performance Indicators)

During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, COSSAR met three times and reviewed the biological status of the following 10 species:

| Species Name | Previous Classification | New Classification |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Wolverine | Extirpated | Extirpated |
| Eastern Wolf | Extirpated | Extirpated |
| Canada Lynx | Endangered | Special Concern |
| Anticosti Aster | Endangered | Special Concern |
| Cobblestone Tiger Beetle | Endangered | Special Concern |
| Eastern Waterfan | No classification | Threatened |
| Furbish's Lousewort | Endangered | Endangered |
| Eastern Painted Turtle | No classification | Special concern |
| Skillet Clubtail | Endangered | Data Deficient |
| Black-foam Lichen | No classification | Endangered |

All 10 status reports were determined to be acceptable by COSSAR, quorum was achieved for each meeting, and the Minister accepted all the classification recommendations.

| Activity | Key Performance Indicator | Actual |
|--|---------------------------|--------|
| Quorum | 10 | 10 |
| Consensus on classification | 10 | 9* |
| Report to Minister the meeting minutes, record of decision, and reason for designation | 10 | 10 |
| Classification recommendation accepted by Minister | 10 | 10 |
| Publish status report and reasons for designation on Species at Risk public registry | 10 | 10 |

*One status assessment was decided by majority vote.

Financial information

COSSAR BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES
APRIL 1, 2022, TO MARCH 31, 2023

| Category | Budget | Actual |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Members Daily Expenses | \$1,500 | \$0 |
| Administration | \$60 | \$0 |
| TOTAL | \$1,560 | \$0 |

Notes: COSSAR did not incur any expenses as it held meetings virtually. The Committee receives its funding through the budget of DNRED. In addition to the figures provided above, DNRED contributes additional funding and staff resources to support the Committee.

Staffing

Chair: responsible for the overall management and direction of COSSAR.

Representative: responsible for the preparation of status reports.

Administrative: responsible for sending out meeting requests and status reports, as well as producing minutes, record of decision and reason for designation from the meeting, and publishing documents on the public registry.