



Timberwolf Wilderness Society

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Timberwolf sues Fisheries Minister to release long-delayed action plan for threatened trout

Calgary — Acting for Timberwolf, lawyers with University of Calgary's Public Interest Law Clinic are filing an application in Federal Court to force the Minister of Fisheries to release a long-overdue action plan for recovering Alberta's native westslope cutthroat trout.

An action plan, required under Canada's Species At Risk Act (SARA), is urgently needed to provide legal protection for threatened critical habitat and to prevent further population extinctions. Repeated requests by Timberwolf and others to post the action plan for public comment, as required under SARA, have been unsuccessful. The action plan was originally scheduled to be published March 31, 2015.

Once widespread, abundant, and a mainstay of southwestern Alberta's sport fishery, the native form of westslope cutthroat trout has declined severely. It is now restricted mainly to a few small, isolated headwaters. It has been listed as Threatened under SARA since 2013. A recovery strategy was issued in 2014, which was supposed to be followed by an action plan by the end of March 2015. Despite several missed deadlines, repeated warnings that many individual remaining populations are at grave risk, and that one crucially important stock had already gone extinct, the Minister has kept his draft action plan under wraps.

Dave Mayhood, M.Sc, Aquatic Ecologist & President, Timberwolf Wilderness Society:

"Most remaining populations are at severe risk. One has been driven extinct since 2015. Others are in decline. Several have had critical habitat destroyed by logging roads, off-highway vehicle trails, inadequate culverts and drought. Two are under threat from the proposed Grassy Mountain Mine. Long-term chances of survival for three-quarters of remaining populations is less than a coin toss."

Drew Yewchuk, Lawyer, Public Interest Law Clinic, Faculty of Law, University of Calgary:

"The ongoing decline of westslope cutthroat trout is a symptom of federal officials continually undermining the Species at Risk Act. It is disappointing to see the government ignore their legal obligations to take action to prevent extinctions."