

Minister of the Environment



Ministre de l'Environnement

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H3

NOV 20 2003

Dr. Marco Festa-Bianchet
Chair of COSEWIC
c/o COSEWIC Secretariat
Environment Canada
Ottawa ON K1A 0H3

Dear Dr. Festa-Bianchet:

I am writing to follow up on the recent letter I sent to you on behalf of the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council (CESCC), providing general direction for 2003-2004.

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation for your report of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife In Canada's (COSEWIC) assessments for 2002 and 2003, and the constructive assistance of you and your committee in the ongoing challenge of striving for greater transparency and openness as we move forward in making the new *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) operational.

As you are aware, SARA imposes a number of requirements and timelines. As we gain experience, we are discovering that additional operational changes are required to implement certain elements of the Act. One area where this applies is the regulatory process to consider amendments to Schedule 1, the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk*. Further detailed information on the COSEWIC assessments will be required, because of the requirements of the associated public consultations.

The formal transmission to the CESCC and I, of COSEWIC assessments and the reasons for the assessments, as required under article 25(1) of SARA, will need to include additional information beyond that provided in your letter of June 17, following the last COSEWIC meeting. The COSEWIC assessment report should contain the finalized status reports for all extirpated, endangered, threatened and special concern species, and the reasons for the assessments. These reasons must include a detailed description of the basis for

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the designation, including a description of the assessment criteria met and other factors considered, as well as a description of the scientific uncertainties in the information. This package will need to be placed on SARA's public registry, to comply with article 25(1) of the Act.

I understand the enormous effort the COSEWIC Secretariat and Co-chairs have made in an attempt to complete all of the status reports in both official languages, and it is much appreciated. However, to enable COSEWIC to compile its assessment report as quickly as possible, as well as to allow Environment Canada to comply with the *Official Languages Act*, the status reports that serve as the basis for the assessments will need to be finalized two months before COSEWIC considers them at an assessment meeting. This will allow the COSEWIC Secretariat, on behalf of COSEWIC, sufficient time to co-ordinate the translation of the finalized reports, prior to the species assessment meetings. Should significant new information with the potential to influence members' assessment decisions or other important changes to the report be brought to the table during discussions on a species, assessment of that species should be deferred until the information can be formally included in the status report.

In the interest of best use of limited resources, COSEWIC should, in future, provide the CESSC and the Minister of the Environment with only one assessment report per year, as required under SARA's article 26. This could perhaps be carried out by having only one meeting per year or, alternatively, by submitting a report once a year. To do so would seem feasible if the process for the ten-year re-assessments of species could be simplified, and if you could agree on alternative means to discuss procedural and other matters. As there may be several options, I urge you to explore ways of operating that would result in one assessment report per year and a streamlined re-assessment process. I encourage you to continue the positive dialogue with my officials as we move forward in this new and challenging process.

Please be assured that the process for ministerial appointment of COSEWIC members is proceeding. Members should be receiving their letters of appointment before the November COSEWIC meeting.

To further clarify or discuss any of these issues, please contact Mr. Trevor Swerdfager, Director General of the Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, at (819) 997-1301 or trevor.swerdfager@ec.gc.ca.

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The valuable work carried out to date by you and the members of COSEWIC is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Anderson". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

David Anderson, P.C., M.P.

c.c.: The Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council
Mr. Simon Nadeau, The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife In
Canada Secretariat