

August 22, 2016

Dear Honourable Kathryn McGarry,  
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry

We are writing to express concern over the unlawful delay by the Province of Ontario in producing a government response statement following publication of the recovery strategy for American Eel. This recovery strategy was published on November 22nd, 2013, nearly five months past the legal deadline under Ontario's Endangered Species Act (ESA). As of today, the response statement is now two years overdue. The Canadian Wildlife Federation wrote you regarding this issue on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016, but to date has received only an acknowledgement of the letter. The lack of communication from the Ontario Government regarding the cause of this delay and when the response statement will be issued is of great concern.

The range of American Eel in Ontario has contracted severely, and the province's overall population is now likely less than 1% of its historic abundance. Furthermore, eels from Ontario were once thought to contribute 25 to 67% of the global population's recruitment potential. The dramatic reduction in abundance of Ontario eels therefore threatens the persistence of the species overall. Given the extreme status of the population, rapid action is required. Major delays in government action such as in issuing the recovery strategy and response statement contravene the ESA, hinder public and private efforts to recover this species, and threaten the persistence of the species in Ontario.

The recovery strategy calls for a 10% increase in access to habitat for American Eel every five years beginning in 2013; without the response statement in place, it will be extremely difficult to achieve this objective by 2018. Juvenile eels are barred from accessing most of their historic habitat, and outmigrating adult eels continue to be killed by hydropower turbines. Each season that passes without implementing recovery actions further reduces the abundance of Ontario's eels and increases the challenges associated with their recovery.

Real progress towards recovery is not possible without the publication of the government response statement for American Eel. We ask that the response statement be issued as soon as possible and that the Government of Ontario commence work immediately thereafter on the recovery of this species. We request a written acknowledgement of the receipt of this letter and a response to it at your earliest convenience.

We stand ready to contribute our knowledge and resources to help finalize the response statement and implement recovery actions.

Signed,



Nicolas W. R. Lapointe, Senior Conservation Biologist – Freshwater Ecology  
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Stephanie Bolt, Legal Strategist  
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