



Algonquins of Ontario

The Algonquins of Ontario Call on the Province of Ontario to Produce Government Response Statement on the American Eel

Monday, August 22, 2016 (Pembroke, ON) - The Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) are calling on the Province of Ontario to produce a Government Response Statement (GRS) to the American Eel Recovery Strategy published on November 22, 2013. Today marks the two-year anniversary of the due date of the GRS, a critical step in implementing the actions outlined in the species' Recovery Strategy.

The American eel, known as Pimisi in the Algonquin language, is sacred to the Algonquin people – a people who have maintained a cultural connection with Pimisi as a provider of nourishment, medicine and spiritual inspiration since time immemorial. For thousands of years an abundance of Pimisi sustained the Algonquin people throughout our Traditional Territory, the Ottawa River Basin. However, Pimisi has suffered dramatic population declines in recent history and is disappearing from our waters. Today, we are left with only a remnant population in Ontario.

The AOO are deeply concerned about Pimisi's sharp decline and we have been working in earnest with governments, private proponents and conservation organizations to build upon existing knowledge and to enhance protection and recovery efforts for the American eel. These initiatives demonstrate the value of adopting a collaborative, partner-based approach to tackle complex issues, such as the restoration of Pimisi to its traditional habitat throughout Algonquin Traditional Territory.

Given the extreme status of the American eel population, immediate action on the part of the Province of Ontario is critical. The continued delay in government action, including the delay in the release of the GRS, hinders the above-noted collaborative efforts to recover this species, and threatens the persistence of the species in Ontario.

The Recovery Strategy calls for a 10 percent increase in access to habitat for American eel every five years beginning in 2013; however, 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 is further reducing the abundance of Pimisi in our Territory and increasing the challenges associated with its recovery.

The AOO urge Ontario to demonstrate its commitment to the recovery of this species by releasing the GRS as soon as possible. Until then, we stand ready to contribute our knowledge to assist in the finalization of the Response Statement and implement recovery actions.