



Staff Report to Council - for Information

Title: Redside Dace Recovery Strategy Action Plan Report

From: Jack Van Dorp, Director of Planning and Development

Date: March 21, 2024

Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

Report Summary:

The Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has posted a proposed Recovery Strategy/Action Plan for the Redside Dace, an endangered minnow species with Critical Habitat within Bruce County. Existing Environmental Protection Zoning within the Municipality of South Bruce generally protects the habitat described in the proposed strategy. County staff consulted with staff at South Bruce and provided comments to DFO on the proposed strategy.

Background:

Redside Dace is a small minnow species that lives in rivers and streams in the Southern Great Lake Basin. The species was listed as endangered under the *Species at Risk Act* in 2017 and a resultant draft Recovery Strategy/Action Plan was posted by the DFO for comment in January and February of 2024.

The Saugeen River is one of 14 rivers in Ontario with Redside Dace habitat. Most of this habitat is within the upper reaches of the watershed in Grey County, except for a roughly 4km stretch of Meux Creek within South Bruce near Neustadt. Conservation is focused on “Critical Habitat” which becomes protected under the *Species at Risk Act*, defined for the Redside Dace as the watercourse and meander belt width plus 30m of vegetated area. The area of Critical Habitat is generally captured within the existing Environmental Protection Zone of the Municipality of South Bruce’s Zoning By-law, and spans roughly eight rural properties. Beyond defining Critical Habitat, the proposed Recovery Strategy/Action Plan contains measures for best practices in conservation, such as landowner awareness and incentive programs, rehabilitation projects and encouraging farmers to prepare Environmental Farm Plans.

County staff circulated a report outlining the proposed protection measures to the staff at South Bruce, who generally did not have comments. County staff provided comments to DFO noting the existing Environmental Protection Zone. Staff also noted that zoning is limited to regulating construction and does not regulate site alteration or vegetation clearing; as such, staff highlighted support for DFO initiatives toward landowner awareness and best practices.

Due to timing constraints, staff were unable to provide a report to Council for comment within the commenting window provided by DFO.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations associated with this report.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

Transportation & Environmental Services has reviewed the protection measures.

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Environment and Climate Change - Build capacity to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change

Report Author:

Jake Bousfield-Bastedo, Intermediate Planner

Departmental Approval:

Monica Walker-Bolton, Planning Manager

Approved for Submission:

Christine MacDonald, Chief Administrative Officer