Species Status Assessment

Class: **Bivalvia**
Family: **Unionidae**
Scientific Name: ***Potamilus alatus***
Common Name: **Pink heelsplitter**

Species synopsis:

Potamilus alatus belongs to the subfamily Ambleminae and the tribe Lampsilini, which includes 17 extant and 6 likely extirpated New York species of the genera Actinonaias, Epioblasma, Lampsilis, Leptodea, Ligumia, Obovaria, Potamilus, Ptychobranchus, Toxolasma, Truncilla, and Villosa (Haag 2012; Graf and Cummings 2011). *P. alatus* is one of two species of the genus Potamilus that have been found in New York (Strayer and Jirka 1997).

P. alatus is found in the Mississippi River system as well as in the Great Lakes drainage and the upper St. Lawrence River. In New York's it is currently found in 18 waterbodies in the Lower Genesee, West Lake Ontario (Mahar & Landry 2013), east Lake Ontario (Black River Bay, Burlakova et al. unpublished), Finger Lakes (White et al. 2011), Erie (Mahar & Landry 2013, NY Natural Heritage Program 2013), and Lake Champlain basins (NY Natural Heritage Program 2013, White et al. 2011), and in the Erie Canal (Mahar & Landry 2013). Its habitat ranges from quiet waters of lakes and canals to riffles of creeks and rivers (Watters et al. 2009).

Although rare and ranked as "Imperiled/Vulnerable" in New York, this edge of range species is considered secure throughout its range. In North America, approximately 2/3 to 3/4 of native mussel species are extinct, listed as endangered or threatened, or are in need of conservation status (Williams *et al.* 1993; Stein *et al.* 2000). While population trends in New York are unknown, based on sparse historical information it is assumed that they too are declining due to a myriad of environmental stressors.

I. Status

a. Current and Legal Protected Status

i. **Federal** ________None______________________**Candidate?** ___No____

ii. **New York** _____None – Species of Greatest Conservation Need_________

b. Natural Heritage Program Rank

i. **Global** ___G5 - Secure____

ii. **New York** ___S2S3 – Imperiled/Vulnerable___ **Tracked by NYNHP?** __Yes__

Other Rank:

IUCN Red List Category: Least concern
American Fisheries Society Status: Currently Stable (1993)

Status Discussion:

This species is widespread throughout central North America and is considered stable and secure throughout its range, although some Canadian occurrences are declining, as are occurrences at the edge of the range of the species (NatureServe 2013).

II. Abundance and Distribution Trends

a. North America

i. **Abundance**

____ declining ____increasing __X__stable ____unknown

ii. **Distribution:**

____ declining ____increasing __X__stable ____unknown

Time frame considered: ____

b. Regional

i. Abundance

__X__ declining ____increasing _____stable _____unknown

ii. Distribution:

__X__ declining ____increasing ______stable ______unknown

Regional Unit Considered:____
Time Frame Considered: ____

c. Adjacent States and Provinces

CONNECTICUT	**Not Present __X____**	**No data _______**
MASSACHUSETTS	**Not Present __X____**	**No data _______**
NEW JERSEY	**Not Present __X____**	**No data _______**
ONTARIO	**Not Present _________**	**No data _______**

i. Abundance

__X__ declining ____increasing ______ stable _____unknown

ii. Distribution:

__X__ declining ____increasing ______ stable _____unknown

Time frame considered: ___2003-2013 ____
Listing Status: ____________ S3 ____

PENNSYLVANIA **Not Present** ________ **No data** _______

i. **Abundance**

__X__ **declining** ____**increasing** ____**stable** ____**unknown**

ii. **Distribution:**

__X__ **declining** ____**increasing** ____**stable** ____**unknown**

Time frame considered: ____
Listing Status: ___S2___________________________________ SGCN? _________

QUEBEC **Not Present** ________ **No data** _______

i. **Abundance**

__X__ **declining** ____**increasing** _____**stable** ____**unknown**

ii. **Distribution:**

___X__ **declining** ____**increasing** ______**stable** ____**unknown**

Time frame considered: ____
Listing Status: ____S1____

VERMONT **Not Present** ________ **No data** ________

i. **Abundance**

__X__ **declining** ____**increasing** ____**stable** ____**unknown**

ii. **Distribution:**

__X__ **declining** ____**increasing** ____**stable** ____**unknown**

Time frame considered: ____
Listing Status: ____S2 - Endangered_____________________ SGCN? ____Yes______

d. NEW YORK **No data _______**

i. Abundance

__X__ declining ____increasing ____stable _____unknown

ii. Distribution:

__X__ declining ____increasing ____stable ______unknown

Time frame considered: ____________________________________

Monitoring in New York.

As part of a State Wildlife Grant, NYSDEC Region 8 Fisheries and Wildlife staff is conducting a baseline survey of tributaries in central and western NY for native freshwater mussels 2009 – 2017.

Trends Discussion:

Trends for New York populations are difficult to determine as most historic data comes from opportunistic naturalist collections, as opposed to more comprehensive baseline surveys. For example, mussels were documented for the first time in 50 of the 106 streams surveyed to date by the Southern Lake Ontario mussel inventory project (Mahar & Landry 2013). This is because many of these streams had never before been surveyed for mussels, not because mussel distribution has dramatically increased. In North America, approximately 2/3 to ¾ of native mussel species are extinct, listed as endangered or threatened, or are in need of conservation status (Williams *et al.* 1993; Stein *et al.* 2000). Based on New York's Natural Heritage S-rank, sparse historical data, and the plight of North America's freshwater mussels, it is assumed that trends are declining due to a myriad of environmental stressors.

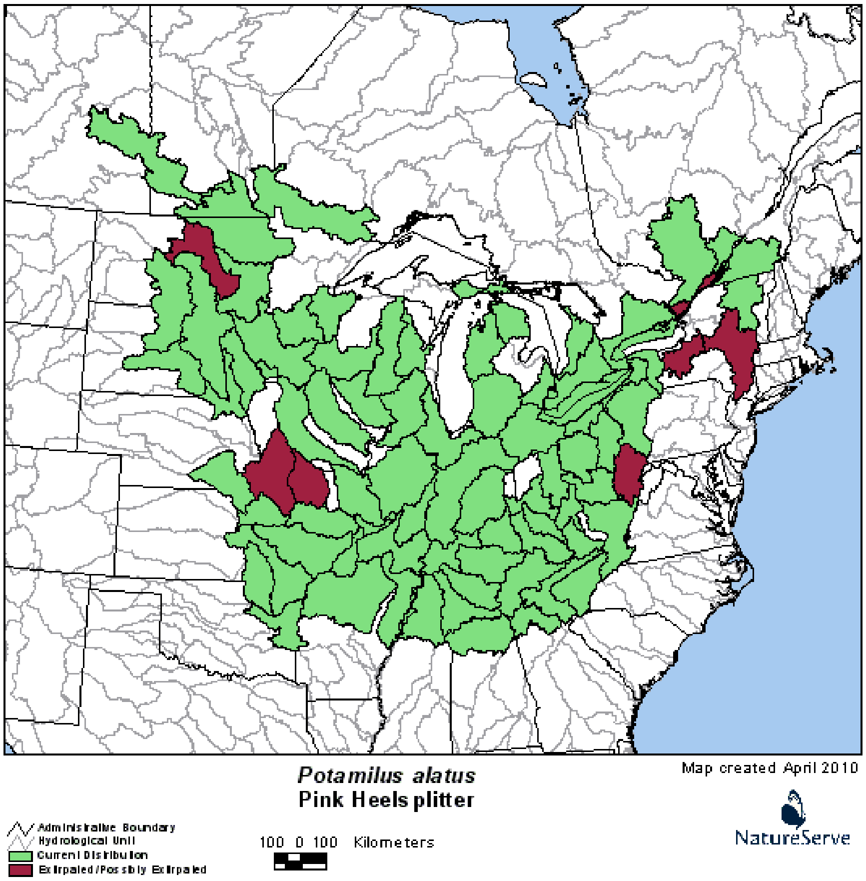

Figure 1. Range wide distribution of *P. alatus* in North American (NatureServe 2013)

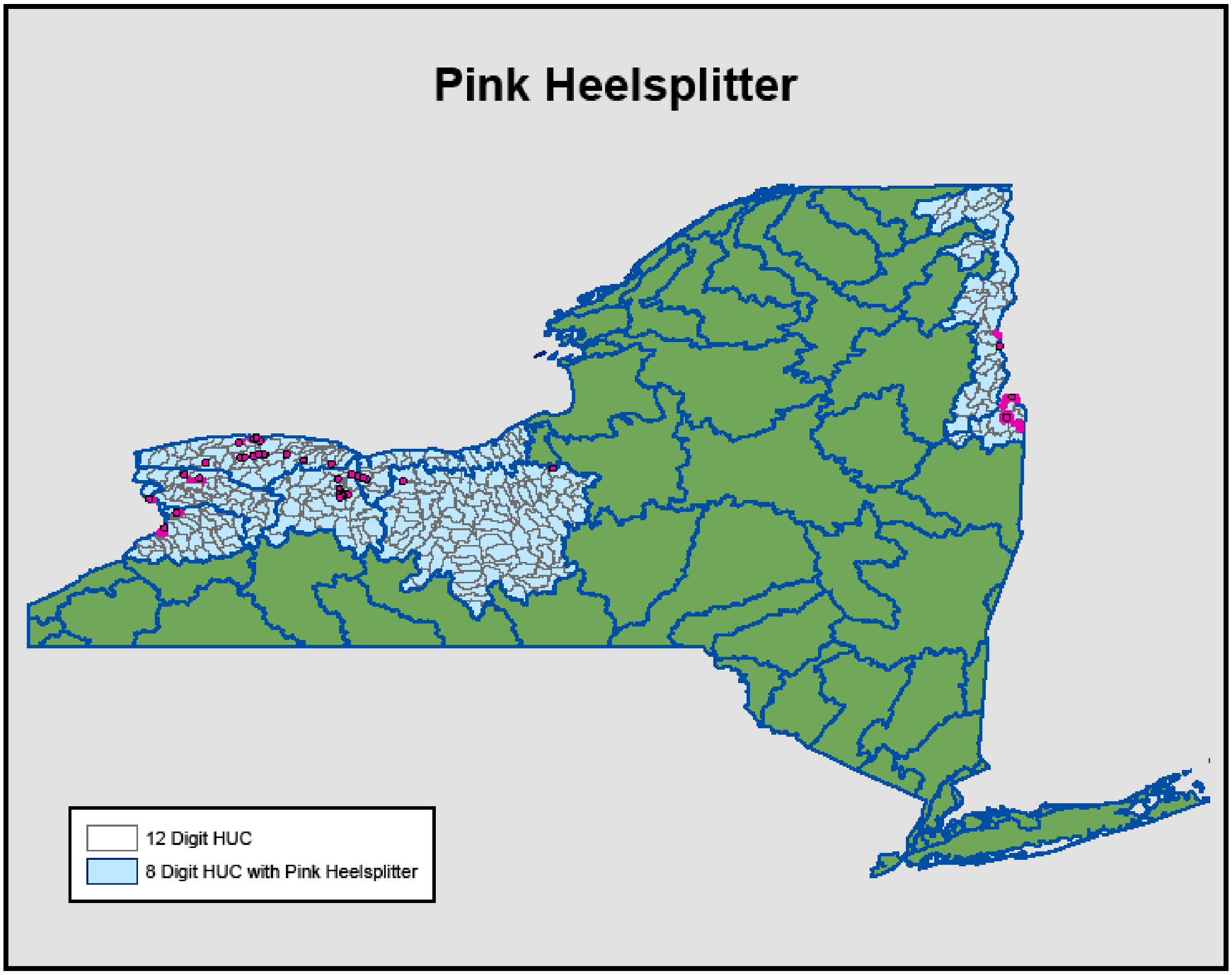

Figure 2. Post 1970 distribution of *P. alatus* in New York (Mahar & Landry 2013; Harman & Lord 2010; The Nature Conservancy 2009; New York Natural Heritage Program 2013; White et al. 2011).

III. New York Rarity, if known:

Historic	# of Animals	# of Locations	% of State
prior to 1970	_unknown_	at least 10 waterbodies_	8 of 56 HUC 8 watersheds
prior to 1980	________	________	________
prior to 1990	________	________	________

Details of historic occurrence:

In New York, *P. alatus* has been found at many sites from Buffalo to Oneida Lake as well as in Lake Champlain and its larger tributaries, and from Canandaigua Lake at Vine Valley. The few historical records from the Albany area probably represent recent range extensions through the Erie or Champlain canals (Strayer & Jirka 1997).

Current	# of Animals	# of Locations	% of State
	~140 live	18 waterbodies	8 of 56 HUC 8 watersheds

Details of current occurrence:

Since 1970, *P. alatus* is has been found in 17 New York State waterbodies.

In the Lower Genesee basin, this species has been found live in Black Creek, Honeoye Creek, and the Genesee River. In the West Lake Ontario basin, it was found live in Johnson Creek and as shells in Oak Orchard Creek (Mahar & Landry 2013). In the Finger Lakes basin, it has been found in Canandaigua Lake at Vine Valley (White et al. 2011). In the Erie basin it has been found live in Tonawanda Creek (Mahar & Landry 2013) and Cayuga Creek, and fresh shells were found in Lake Erie (Athol Springs), Niagara River and Buffalo River (NY Natural Heritage Program 2013). In the Lake Champlain basin, live mussels were found in Putnam Creek Delta, Poultney River, the Mettawee River at Whitehall (NY Natural Heritage Program 2013), and in Lake Champlain at Crown Point (White et al. 2011). *P. alatus* has also been collected from the Lake Ontario's Black River Bay (Mahar & Landry 2013). In the Erie Canal, live specimens were found from Gasport to Albion and over 300 shells, including many fresh dead and juveniles, have been found from Gasport to Macedon, and in the Seneca River at Baldwinsville (Mahar & Landry 2013).

Waterbodies with greatest *P. alatus* abundance include the Poultney River with 42 live, include Honeoye Creek with 38 live, Johnson Creek with 22 live, Black River Bay with 15 live, and the Erie Canal (Mahar & Landry, 2013, NY Natural Heritage Program).

Recent surveys did not find *P. alatus* in the Mid Lake Ontario basin, except where the Erie Canal passes through the watershed (Mahar & Landry 2013). However it has been found in East Lake Ontario basin, in the Black River Bay in 2012 (Burlakova et al., in preparation). Although *P. alatus* has not been reported from the St. Lawrence or its tributaries in northern New York, it may turn up in these waters (Strayer & Jirka 1997).

New York's Contribution to Species North American Range:

% of NA Range in New York	Classification of New York Range
____ 100 (endemic)	____ Core
____ 76-99	__X__ Peripheral
____ 51-75	____ Disjunct
____ 26-50	Distance to core population:
__X__ 1-25	__525 miles__

IV. Primary Habitat or Community Type:

1. Medium River; Low Gradient; Assume Moderately Buffered (Size 3+ rivers); Warm

2. Small River; Low-Moderate Gradient; Moderately Buffered, Neutral; Transitional Cool

3. Medium River; Moderate-High Gradient; Assume Moderately Buffered (Size 3+ rivers); Warm

Habitat or Community Type Trend in New York:

____ Declining ____Stable ____ Increasing __X__Unknown

Time frame of decline/increase: ____________________

Habitat Specialist? ____ Yes __X__ No

Indicator Species? __X__ Yes ____ No

Habitat Discussion:

P. alatus is especially common in quiet backwaters in silty sand and mud. It is widespread in shallow lake habitat, impoundments, canals, and medium to large rivers (Cummings & Mayer 1992; Metcalfe-Smith et al. 2005; NatureServe 2013; Strayer & Jirka 1997; Watters et al. 2009). Although less common, it can also be found in riffles of creeks and rivers (Strayer & Jirka 1997).

V. New York Species Demographics and Life History

___X___ Breeder in New York

__X___ Summer Resident

__X___ Winter Resident

____ Anadromous

____ Non-breeder in New York

____ Summer Resident

____ Winter Resident

____ Catadromous

____ Migratory only

____Unknown

Species Demographics and Life History Discussion:

Upstream males release sperm into the water. Females downstream take up the sperm with incoming water. Fertilization success may be related to population density, with a threshold density required for any reproductive success to occur. Eggs are fertilized within the female. Like nearly all North American mussels, *P. alatus* must parasitize an often specific vertebrate host to complete its life cycle. It is suspected that some mussel populations are not recruiting because their hosts no longer occur with them. Once released by the female, glochidia must acquire a suitable host or die, usually within 24-48 hours. After attaching to a suitable host, glochidia encyst, usually at the fish's gills or fins and receive food and dispersal. Once the glochidia metamorphose into juveniles, they drop from the host. If they land in suitable habitat, they will burrow into the substrate, where they may remain for several years (Watters et al. 2009).

In the adult form, freshwater mussels are basically sessile; movement is limited to a few meters of the lake or river bottom. The only time that significant dispersal can take place is during the parasitic phase. Infected host fishes can transport the larval unionids into new habitats, and can replenish depleted populations with new individuals. Dispersal is particularly important for genetic exchange between populations. Dispersal is likely to be a slow process for mussels which use resident fishes with limited home ranges as their hosts (COSEWIC as cited in NatureServe 2013).

P. alatus is bradytictic, with glochidia overwintering in the female. Ortmann (1919) believed this species bred year round, with overlapping broods. He found gravid females from June to October and again from May to July (Watters et al., 2009). The only known glochidial host for *P. alatus* is the freshwater drum (*Aplodinotus grunniens*)(Brady et al. 2004; Sietman et al. 2009; NatureServe, 2013; Watters et al. 2009). The life span of this species is approximately 15 years (Watters et al. 2009).

VI. Threats:

Agricultural Runoff

The bulk of New York's *P. alatus* population is found in the Genesee River basin (Honeoye Creek, Black Creek), in the Southwest Lake Ontario basin (Johnson Creek, Oak Orchard Creek), and the Erie Canal, all highly agricultural areas, bordered by to some extent by cultivated cropland (NYS Landcover 2010). Aquatic habitats lacking vegetated buffers of adequate width are threatened by runoff from urban areas, roads, lawns, and agricultural land (Gillis 2012). If best management practices are not closely adhered to, mussel habitat adjacent to wood harvest or agricultural land is subjected to pesticide, fertilizer, and silt/sediment runoff. During recent mussel surveys in Western and Central New York, it has been documented that sufficient vegetated riparian buffers are often lacking along known mussel streams (Mahar & Landry 2013), indicating that runoff is a major threat to resident mussel populations.

The presence of pesticides and fertilizers in our rural watersheds is nearly ubiquitous (Haag 2012). And because pesticides and their associated surfactants adsorb onto sediment particles, sedimentation may act as a vector for their transport into the aquatic system (Haag 2012). Mussels are more sensitive to pesticides than many other animals (Watters et al. 2009). Although effects of pesticides are species-specific, sub-lethal levels of PCBs, DDT, malathion, and other compounds inhibit respiratory efficiency and accumulate in the tissues. Atrazine and permethrin at sublethal concentrations reduced juvenile growth (Bringolf et al. 2007a, 2007b) and environmental levels of atrazine altered mussel movement and aggregation behavior (Flynn and Spellman 2009). Pesticides can affect mussels in many ways, but the full range of long-term effects remains unknown (Haag 2012).

Fertilizer runoff is also a concern. High inputs of nitrogen from fertilizers can cause increases in ammonia in the water and the substrate, leading to direct toxicity for a wide range of mussel species. Mussels, especially in their early life stages, are more sensitive to un-ionized ammonia than other organisms, and high sensitivity is seen across a range of species and life histories (Haag 2012). In addition, ammonia adsorbs to sediment particles, resulting higher nitrogen concentrations in the substrate than in the overlying water. The nitrogen present in the interstitial spaces in the substrate is thought to result in juvenile mortality and to prevent recruitment by some mussel species (Strayer and Malcom 2012). Studies have suggested decreasing sediment loads entering aquatic systems as the best way to decrease the impact of numerous stressors for mussels in general (Roley et al. 2012).

Treated and Untreated Waste Water

Several known *P. alatus* sites are located near areas of known combined sewer outflows as well as the permitted discharge of treated wastewater. These areas include sites on the Niagara River and the Erie Canal, with CSOs near Lockport and Medina and treated waste water discharge from Rochester and several smaller municipalities along the Erie Canal (Combined Sewer Overflow 2013, SPDES 2007). Illegal dumping of sewage from recreational boats in the Erie Canal may also a concern. Recent studies show that mussel richness and abundance decreases with increased proximity to sewage effluent (Wildenberg 2012). The input of biomaterial from waste water treatment plants depletes dissolved oxygen levels, negatively impacting mussels. Ammonia from wastewater treatment plants has been found to be toxic to glochidia (Goudraeu et al. 1993) and at sub-lethal exposure, adult mussels exhibit decreased respiratory efficiency (Anderson et al*.* 1978). Endocrine disrupters from pharmaceuticals also originate from municipal sewage effluents and are increasing common in rivers and lakes (Haag 2012). In mussels, chronic exposure to estrogenic compounds in effluents caused feminization of male mussels, but these individuals did not produce eggs, suggesting major disruption of reproductive function (Gagne et al. 2011). The long term effects of these compounds on mussels are unknown (Haag 2012). It should be noted that in the Susquehanna Basin, Harman and Lord (2010) found no evidence that waste water treatment plants were responsible for reductions in mussel species of greatest conservation need.

Runoff from Developed Land

All 17 of New York waterbodies that host *P. alatus* populations are intermittently bordered by interstate highways, state routes, and/or local roads and lawns, and receive runoff containing metals and road salts from these sources (Gillis 2012). In particular, populations in the Buffalo River and Lake Erie receive urban runoff from Buffalo and its suburbs. In addition, Erie Canal populations receive urban storm water runoff from multiple municipalities including Lockport, Medina, Albion, Brockport, Spencerport, and Rochester (New York State Landcover 2010). Mussels are particularly sensitive to heavy metals, more so than many other animals used in toxicological tests (Keller & Zam 1991). Low levels of metals may interfere with the ability of glochidia to attach to the host (Huebner & Pynnonen 1992), suggesting that EPA ambient water quality criteria may not adequately protect mussels from toxic metals (Wang et al. 2011). In addition, increases in salinity from the runoff of salt used for clearing roads in winter may be lethal to glochidia and juvenile mussels (Keller & Zam 1991, Liquori & Insler 1985, Pandolfo et al. 2012). Based on these studies, the U.S. EPA's ambient water quality criterion for acute chloride exposures may not be protective of all freshwater mussels.

Recent studies have shown that copper can significantly alter *P. alatus'* thermal tolerance (Pandolfo et al. 2010) and that *P. alatus* has thermal thresholds that allow for burrowing (Block 2013), suggesting that exposure to heavy metals can impact survival. These threats would be exacerbated by the anticipated thermal tolerances problems associated with climate change, as mussel populations shift towards less diversity and more abundant thermally tolerant species (Gailbraith et al. 2010, Pandolfo et al. 2010). This may be a concern for *P. alatus* in the Buffalo and Rochester regions, as well as in communities that fall along the Erie Canal.

Invasive Species

In the Erie Canal, zebra and quagga mussels (*Dreissena bugenis*) and Asian clams (*Corbicula*) have been found in large numbers (Mahar and Landry 2013). Invasive zebra and quagga mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha* and *Dreissena bugenis*) have been repeatedly cited as a threat to native mussel populations (Strayer & Jirka 1997; Watters et al. 2009). En masse, Dreissenids outcompete native mussels by removing food and oxygen from the water. They can also reduce reproductive success by filtering native mussel male gametes from the water column. They can foul the shells of the native mussels to the point that their valves can no longer open. In heavily invested areas, they may transform a habitat by hardening the substrate, such that dislodged mussels are not able to rebury (USFWS 1994). In addition, ammonia from Asian clam die offs has been shown to be capable of exceeding acute effect levels of some mussel species (Cherry et al. 2005). These invasives may be a threat to populations in Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the Erie Canal, Oak Orchard Creek, and along Lake Champlain. Outside New York State, the *P. alatus* population in the Ottawa River has been threatened by zebra mussels (Schueler & Karstad 2007).

Sea lamprey control treatments – Pultney River and in tributaries to Lake Ontario

Habitat Modifications

Ecosystem modifications, such as in-stream work associated with, canal dredging bridge replacements, gravel mining, and vegetation removal kill mussels and destroy their habitat. For example, dredging for vegetation removal has been shown to remove up to 23% of mussels in spoils (Aldridge 2000). Further evidence for disruption was provided by mussel surveys adjacent to approximately 20 river miles of Conewango Creek that had been channelized and straightened in the first half of the 20th century. The resulting "dredge" had no riffle or run habitat and sites just below and above this channelized section contained few or no mussels (The Nature Conservancy 2009). Although limited in geographic scope these habitat modification activities have long term impacts on mussels and their distribution (Aldridge 2000).

Based on the number of fresh shells found and live individuals found, it is thought that a significant portion of New York's *P. alatus* populations reside in the Erie Canal system. In addition to those habitat modifications previously mentioned, threats to the Erie Canal populations include maintenance dredging by the NY Canal Corporation and seasonal water draw downs. Seasonal draw downs of water bodies have been shown to impact unionid age distributions (Richardson et al. 2002) and it is likely that the Erie Canal water draw downs have negative impacts on *P. alatus* populations. During spring mussel surveys of the Erie Canal, it is not uncommon to find hundreds of fresh shells of multiple species, including *P. alatus,* and multiple age classes, many containing desiccating flesh along the exposed canal banks and bed (Mahar & Landry 2013). This antidotal evidence suggests seasonal draw downs have a large impact on these populations.

Impoundments – Range wide

Across its range, impoundments likely contributed to the reduced distribution of mussels that we see today. Vaughn and Taylor (1999) observed a mussel extinction gradient with a gradual, linear increase in mussel species richness and abundance with increasing distance downstream from impoundments. Species and their hosts that require shallow, oxygenated, fast-flowing water quickly are eliminated. Continuously cold water from both increased water depth upstream of the dam and dam discharges downstream of the dam may prevent reproduction. Impoundment increases silt load and eutrophication, resulting in changes in the fish fauna, and therefore the availability of hosts. Dams represent distributional barriers to fish hosts, and therefore to the mussels themselves. The zoogeographic patterns of several species suggest a dam-limited range. Dams also act as sediment traps, often having many feet of silt and debris caught on their upstream side. These areas generally are without mussels. Below the dam, the tailwaters often have dense mussel beds, as these reaches are the only areas left that still have oxygenated, fast moving water. This is exemplified by the distribution of beds in the lower Muskingum River, Ohio (Stansbery & King 1983; ESI 1993c).

In addition, improperly sized and poorly installed or poorly maintained culverts have impacts similar to dams in that they fragment habitat, preventing the movement by host fish, and effectively isolating mussel populations. And because culverts are located at nearly every road-stream intersection, there is the potential for landscape level fragmentation of mussel habitat.

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

______ No **_____ Unknown**

___X___ Yes

Mussel habitats receive some generic protection under several New York State regulations (NYCRR) promulgated under the authority of the New York Environmental Conservation Law (ECL), specifically Part 608 of the NYCRR: Use and Protection of Waters, and Part 617 of the NYCRR: State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR). Part 608 provides protection of some mussel habitats by regulating and requiring environmental review of the modification or disturbance of any “protected stream”, its bed or bank, and removal of sand, gravel or other material from its bed or banks (608.2 Disturbance of Protected Streams). This does not provide adequate protection of mussels and their habitats as it only protects streams or particular portions of a streams for which there has been adopted by NYSDEC or any of its predecessors any of the following classifications or standards: AA, AA(t), A, A(t), B, B(t) C(t), or Streams designated (t)(trout) also include those more specifically designated (ts)(trout spawning). Mussels habitats may also receive some additional protections as the construction, repair, breach or removals of dams, and the excavation and placement of fill in navigable waters are subject to regulation and environmental review under Part 608, 608.3 and 608.5 respectively. Under part 608, projects requiring a permit can be conditioned by NYSDEC to include best management practices, such as sediment and erosion protections. Through the review process, these projects can also be modified to reduce impacts in order to meet permit issuance standards.

Under Part 608, protection of unlisted species of mussels is general and relatively limited. More importantly, Class C and D waters with mussels do not receive protection under these regulations. A significant portion of the New York's mussel resources occur within Class C and D waters (see species specific streams in threats/management discussion) An additional but not insignificant gap in protection occurs because agricultural activities consisting of the crossing and re-crossing of a protected stream by livestock or wheeled farming equipment normally used for traditional agricultural purposes or of withdrawing irrigation water in a manner which does not otherwise alter the stream, are exempt from these regulations and environmental review.

Water quality certifications required by Section 401 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, Title 33 United States Code 1341(see subdivision (c) of this Section)may provide protection for freshwater mussels and their habitats from some activities that would potentially have adverse impacts by regulating construction or operation of facilities that may result in any discharge into navigable waters. Water quality certifications set water quality-related effluent limitations, water quality standards, thermal discharge criteria, effluent prohibitions and pretreatment standards for projects on navigable waters.

The State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR, Part 617 NYCRR) may also protect mussels and their habitats by requiring the consideration of environmental factors into the existing planning, review and decision-making processes of state, regional and local government agencies for activities that require discretionary approval. SEQR requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, including an alternatives analysis, for those activities that may result in a substantial adverse change in ground or surface water quality; a substantial increase in potential for erosion, flooding, leaching or drainage problems; the removal or destruction of large quantities of vegetation or fauna; substantial interference with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species; impacts on a significant habitat area; substantial adverse impacts on a threatened or endangered species of animal or plant, or the habitat of such a species; other significant adverse impacts to natural resources; or, a substantial change in the use, or intensity of use, of land including agricultural, open space or recreational resources, or in its capacity to support existing uses.

New York State has numerous laws and regulations that both directly or indirectly protect waters of the state (mussel habitats) including regulations governing direct discharges to surface and groundwater, storm water, agricultural activities, pesticides, flood control, and dams. Without these regulations, mussels would certainly be in worse shape; however, most of these generic protections are not adequate in scope or specific enough to mussel threats to protect the mussel resources of New York State.

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

- Priority conservation efforts for this species should focus on, but not be limited to, the Poultney River between the New York border and Whitehall, Honeoye Creek between Rush and the confluence with the Genesee River, Johnson Creek in the town of Carlton, and the Erie Canal between Medina and Spencerport.

- Modify marine mussel regulations or the definition of protected wildlife in NYCRR to clarify that freshwater mussels are protected under ECL. Current regulations could be interpreted that freshwater mussels may only be protected as shellfish without a season within the Marine District.

- Through landowner incentive programs or regulation, riparian buffers, particularly those that also provide shade, should be added/maintained/widened, along agricultural fields, subdivisions, and along major roads to decrease the levels of nitrogen, pesticides, sediment, heavy metals, and salts from entering these aquatic systems, as well as to moderate water temperature. Studies have suggested decreasing sediment loads entering aquatic systems as the best way to decrease the impact of numerous stressors for mussels in general (Roley & Tank 2012).

- Require all state agencies to maintain appropriate vegetative buffers along streams, rivers and lakes on state-owned or state managed properties.

- Develop and implement a comprehensive monitoring strategy that identifies protocols, including locations and specific intervals, for regular monitoring of known mussel populations to detect assess trends and detect dangerous declines.

- Mussel sensitivity to particular pollutants should be considered or addressed in the regulation of wastewater and stormwater discharges to groundwater and surface waters, State Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems (SPDES). This should be reflected in effluent limitations for discharges, including discharges from P/C/I facilities (Private/Commercial/Industrial), CAFO facilities (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations), High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing Discharges, and Wastewater treatment plants, etc. Discharges whose receiving waters have mussels, particularly those with known populations of mussels listed as Endangered, Threatened, Special concern or SGCN, should be carefully reviewed for potential impacts to mussels. For example, deleterious levels of ammonia (a component of many types of discharges) and molluscicides (a commonly used water treatment chemical in discharged water) should not be permitted. Update wastewater treatment facilities in Buffalo, Lockport, and Medina to eliminate combined sewer outflows.

- Coordinate with local wastewater treatment facilities to improve ammonia removal of treated discharge. This has been documented as a threat to Unionids at multiple life stages, and therefore needs to be addressed (Gillis 2012).

- Enforce No Discharge Zone, and promote the proper discharge of sewage by recreational boaters on the Erie Canal.

- Establish a protocol whereas DEC staff work closely with state and local highway departments to reduce impacts to native mussels during maintenance and construction projects.

- Establish a protocol whereas DEC staff work closely the New York State Canal Corps to reduce impacts to native mussels during maintenance, construction and dredging projects.

- Replace culverts that disrupt aquatic habitat connectivity to allow for passage of small fish species.

- Within the Great Lakes and Champlain watersheds, lamprey control efforts should consider specific, potentially adverse, impacts to native freshwater mussels when determining methods, including selection of lampricide formulations and concentrations.

  Lampricide treatment managers should use caution when using the combination of TFM and niclosamide in streams with known mussel populations and every effort should be made to maintain lampricide concentrations at or near the MLC for sea lamprey to minimize the risk to this important faunal group (Boogaard 2006).

- NYSDEC should consider sensitivity of freshwater mussels to specific pollutants in the establishment and setting of water quality standards and TMDLs for waters containing freshwater mussels. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) specifies the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. TMDLs account for all contributing sources (e.g. point & nonpoint sources, and natural background levels), seasonal variations in the pollutant load, and incorporate a margin of safety that accounts for unknown or unexpected sources of the pollutant. In essence, a TMDL defines the capacity of the waterbody to absorb a pollutant and still meet water quality standards. The Clean Water Act requires states to identify waterbodies that do not meet water quality standards after application of technology-based effluent limitations. For these "impaired waters," states must consider the development of alternative strategies, including TMDLs, for reducing the pollutants responsible for the failure to meet water quality standards.

The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (NYSDEC 2006) includes recommendations for the following actions for freshwater mussels:

Habitat management:

- Manage areas of important mussel populations by controlling degradation factors (e.g.. Controlling livestock access, point source or non-point source pollution, flow alteration, etc.)
- Develop methods to improve and restore freshwater bivalve habitat.

Habitat research:

- Conduct research to determine habitat parameters necessary for good populations of each species of species-at-risk listed mussels.
- Research flow requirements of freshwater bivalves and model the effects of flow changes both in volume and timing.
- Research all parameters of mussel habitat requirements including temperature, substrate, fish, flow, food, etc.

Habitat restoration:

- Restore degraded habitat areas to allow for recolonization or reintroduction of listed mussels.

Invasive species control:

- Develop a monitoring/control plan that includes measures to detect invasive species problematic to freshwater bivalves in all New York watersheds and actions that will be taken to control them before they become threats.
- Conduct research on control of exotic bivalve species that compete with native mussels and exotic crustaceans or fish which may prey on them.

Life history research:

- Research effects of pesticides and other chemicals, including ammonia, on all life stages of freshwater bivalves: sperm/egg, glochidia, larva, adults.
- Research potential interbreeding between *Alasmidonta varicosa* and *Alasmidonta marginata* and, if occurring, evaluate the potential threat to *A. varicosa* population integrity.
- Determine fish hosts for species where this is not known for populations living in New York.
- Research population dynamics of listed mussel species including connectivity of populations or subpopulations and genetic distinctness of populations or subpopulations.
- Determine or confirm breeding phenology and habitat conditions necessary for successful breeding for listed mussels (e.g.. mussel density, pop. level of fish host, temp, flow).

Modify regulation:

- Modify marine mussel regulations to be clearer that freshwater mussels are protected under ECL.

New regulation:

- Ban the importation of fish that feed on freshwater mollusks (e.g.. black carp).
- Require inclusion of all stages of freshwater mussels in testing for approval of new pesticides in New York.

Other action:

- Develop an outreach program to private landowners through the Landowner Incentive Program to educate the public about freshwater mussel protection and initiate projects to prevent or repair impacts from land use on mussels.
- Increase regional permit control of development and highway projects that may impact native mussels.
- Develop standard monitoring/survey protocols for development projects in all watersheds in New York.
- Evaluate threats to mussels in each New York watershed and prioritize areas for actions to address the threats.
- Research the best survey methods both for detection of rare species and evaluation of population status and trends.
- Begin evaluation of members of the family Sphaeridae (fingernail clams) for inclusion into the species at risk list.

Population monitoring:

- Conduct population estimates of species-at-risk listed mussel species in NY
- Conduct surveys to determine distribution of species-at-risk listed mussel species in NY.

Regional management plan:

- Incorporate freshwater mussel goals and objectives into regional water quality and fish management plans and policies.

Relocation/reintroduction:

- Where appropriate, reintroduce listed mussels into appropriate habitat within their historic range.

Statewide management plan:

- Incorporate freshwater mussel goals and objectives into statewide water quality and fish management plans and policies.

VII. References

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