

USDA Forest Service Update

September 2008



SUBJECT: Canada Lynx Recovery and Forest Plan Amendments

SUMMARY: Canada lynx recovery activities are ongoing, and most National Forests have now identified and adopted lynx conservation measures as Forest Plan amendments under the National Forest Management Act. Twelve Forests had previously revised their Plans, incorporating concepts from the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS) to conserve lynx habitat, and the Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) for the Northern Rocky Mountain Amendment were issued in June, 2007, amending Forest Plans on 18 additional Forests. The Southern Rocky Mountain Lynx amendment is very near completion.

BACKGROUND: The Forest Service adopted additional lynx conservation and recovery actions through plan amendments and/or revisions based on several events: 1) the listing in 2000 of the Canada lynx as a threatened species throughout its range in the lower 48-states; 2) the 2000 Lynx Conservation Agreement (last revised in 2006) between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS); and 3) Forest Service management emphasis on “occupied” habitat. The Agreement is an interim measure meant to reduce or eliminate adverse effects of proposed projects to lynx and occupied habitat until long-term conservation measures are in place. The Federal agencies have agreed to consider the (LCAS, August 2000) in the design of projects and forest plan amendments and revisions to address risks to lynx. The LCAS was based on the best available science, is currently being reviewed, and some updates are expected in 2008.

Forest Service Forest Plan lynx conservation amendment status:

- The Southern Rocky Mountain Lynx Amendment will apply to eight national forests in Wyoming and Colorado. A draft amendment and associated documents were released to the public for comment in January, 2004. The final EIS and ROD for the Southern Rockies Amendment are expected to be completed in September 2008.
- The Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) for the Northern Rockies Amendment were completed and distributed in June, 2007. This amendment added lynx recovery and conservation direction to 18 national forests in Montana, Idaho, Utah and Wyoming.
- Twelve Forest Plans had been amended or revised prior to 2007.
- All amendment efforts are using best available information, including the Lynx Science Report, Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy recommendations, the Forest Service-FWS Conservation Agreement, the listing analysis, and other information.

On November 9, 2006 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a final rule designating critical habitat for Canada lynx. The rule did not designate any NFS lands because either Forest Plans already had been revised to incorporate lynx conservation measures, or National Forests were operating under the Lynx Conservation Agreement. The FWS has now re-evaluated that rule, to ensure that it comports with the best available scientific information. On Feb. 28, 2008 the FWS proposed a new critical habitat designation rule, which does include designation of NFS lands.

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Northern Rocky Mountain Lynx Amendment EIS and ROD <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/planning/lynx.html>
USFS National Forest Carnivore Program <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/carnivore/>
Southern Rocky Mountain Lynx Amendment DEIS <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/projects/lynx/>