

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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Protection for Canada Lynx in New Mexico Is Warranted

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that changing the boundaries of the Endangered Species Act (Act) listing for the Canada lynx to include the State of New Mexico is warranted; however, the action is precluded at this time by the need to complete other listing actions of a higher priority.

The Service will add lynx in New Mexico to the candidate species list and develop a proposed rule to amend the listing of Canada lynx in the Lower 48 states when our priorities allow.

In August 2007, WildEarth Guardians (formerly Forest Guardians) and others petitioned the Service to amend the final listing for Canada lynx to include New Mexico. In December 2008, the Service initiated a status review after determining that the petitioners presented substantial information indicating that changing the listing rule to include New Mexico may be warranted.

In the final listing rule for Canada lynx published in March 2000, the Service defined a contiguous Distinct Population Segment of the Canada lynx based on state boundaries and included 14 states within the historical and current range of the species. New Mexico was not included in the listed area due to a lack of a historic record of lynx in the state and lack of sufficient habitat and prey.

The lynx is currently listed as threatened in Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Lynx is a species with a large home range and the ability to roam great distances. The Service has found that lynx dispersal out of the Southern Rockies into New Mexico as a result of the Colorado reintroduction program is occurring at a higher frequency than initially anticipated. This raises the concern that lynx attempting to disperse outside of Colorado were inappropriately left without Federal protections.

The Service does not believe that habitat in New Mexico can support reproducing lynx or a lynx population or that habitat in New Mexico may play a supporting role in the

conservation of lynx. The only role the Service believes New Mexico may play in lynx conservation is to allow individual animals to survive long enough to move back north into more suitable habitat.

Lynx habitat can generally be described as moist boreal forests that have cold, snowy winters and a high density of snowshoe hare prey base. Lynx are specialized predators of snowshoe hare and are dependent on snowshoe hare populations for survival. The Service considers snowshoe hare densities to be the most important habitat component for lynx.

Habitat in New Mexico that may support lynx is limited to the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains in the northern part of the state. Both of these ranges are contiguous with mountains in Colorado where reintroduced lynx are residing and have reproduced. Both of these mountain ranges have snowshoe hares; however, densities are low and may not be high enough to support resident lynx.

For more information, please visit the Service's web site at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/lynx>

This finding is published in today's Federal Register.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.