

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**Mountain-Prairie Region**  
**134 Union Boulevard**  
**Lakewood, Colorado**

03-54

June 27, 2003

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Lori Nordstrom 406-449-5225- ext 208

Diane Katzenberger 303-236-7917 ext 408

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Finds that Canada Lynx Should Remain  
Listed As Threatened In Lower 48

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the Canada lynx should not be classified as an endangered species, as defined under the Endangered Species Act, in the contiguous United States. The lynx will remain listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

The finding announced today clarifies a finding made when the contiguous U.S. population of the Canada lynx was listed as a threatened species in March of 2000.

Subsequent to the final listing, Defenders of Wildlife et al filed suit asserting that the listing of the Canada lynx as threatened, rather than endangered, was arbitrary and capricious and challenging the Service's finding regarding threats to the species, identification of a single distinct population segment (a distinct population segment is a portion of a species' or subspecies' population or range), and failure to designate critical habitat for the species.

By court order, the Service was directed to reconsider its determination regarding the status of the lynx under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Court also ordered the Service to designate critical habitat for lynx, and prohibited certain determinations associated with federally funded projects until critical habitat has been designated. Accordingly, the Service reanalyzed its March 2000 listing decision and evaluated new information available since the listing in 2000 and provided during a public comment period. This re-analysis does not address critical habitat.

Based on known threats to lynx and lynx habitat, the Service determined that the lynx should not be listed as an endangered species because there is no evidence to indicate that the contiguous United States lynx population is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

The range of the lynx consists of the States of Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming because these states contain lynx habitat (boreal forest) and have more frequent records of lynx occurrences.

“After reanalyzing all available information, the Service does not believe the Canada lynx is in danger of extinction in the Lower 48,” said Ralph Morgenweck, the Service’s Director of the Mountain-Prairie Region. “An evaluation of all new information supports this finding.”

As defined by the Endangered Species Act, an endangered species is one that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A threatened species is one that is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. Once listed, a species is afforded the full range of protections available under the ESA.

In this reanalysis, the Service found there are some low-to-moderate level threats to lynx within its range, primarily on non-federal lands. Such threats include certain kinds of forest management and fire suppression efforts that reduce the amount of understory vegetation in forests that support lynx. Understory removal may impact the capability of forests to support snowshoe hares, the primary prey of lynx. Additional threats are the lack of a cohesive international strategy to maintain connectivity between lynx habitats in Canada and the United States; incidental mortality during otherwise lawful trapping, hunting and snaring; and high volume traffic and suburban development, primarily in Colorado.

In the west and in the Great Lakes region, much of lynx habitat occurs on Federal lands, particularly National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands. All federal agencies must determine the effects of their actions on lynx and must consult with the Service if any action may affect lynx. During these consultations, federal agencies are guided by the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy, which provides a comprehensive approach necessary to conserve lynx through management of federal lands.

Threats to lynx on National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands have been substantially alleviated because these agencies are committed to using the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy. Currently, the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are in the process of amending or revising their land management plans which is necessary to provide long-term lynx conservation.

Ongoing research continually refines the Service’s understanding of lynx habitat requirements. Based on the best available information, the key to the presence of lynx populations is adequate snowshoe hare populations, the primary prey for lynx. Lynx do not successfully reproduce without an adequate diet of snowshoe hare. Habitat conditions and vegetation types that support adequate snowshoe hare populations are considered lynx habitat. In general, lynx and snowshoe hare habitats are moist boreal forests that receive deep snow and cold winters.

Although lynx have been found in areas on the edge of boreal forests, this habitat is considered marginal, and unlikely to support resident, breeding populations of lynx. Because they are highly mobile, lynx have occasionally been found in areas where they cannot survive for long because these areas do not have boreal forest, deep snow, or snowshoe hares. These areas are not considered within the range of lynx and include States such as Iowa, Nevada, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota.

The Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), the only lynx in North America, is a forest-dwelling cat of

northern latitudes. It feeds primarily on snowshoe hares but also will prey on small mammals and birds. Its range extends from Alaska, throughout much of Canada, to the boreal forests in the northeastern United States, the Great Lakes, the Rocky Mountains and the Cascade Mountains.

The lynx is a medium-sized cat, similar to the bobcat, but appears somewhat larger. It has longer hind legs and very large well-furred paws, which make it highly adapted to hunting snowshoe hares in the deep snow typical throughout its range. It also has unique long tufts on the ears and a short, black-tipped tail.

This finding is expected to be published in the *Federal Register* soon.

For the Service's response, Q&As and other information visit our web site at:

<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/endspp/lynx>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies. For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>

- FWS -