

Canada Lynx may be delisted

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is announcing the completion of a scientific review of the Canada lynx in the contiguous United States. The review concludes that the Canada lynx may no longer warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and should be considered for delisting due to recovery. This recommendation is the result of an extensive review of the best available scientific information and almost 20 years of working in partnership with state, federal, tribal, industry and other land managers on the conservation of this species. As a result of this status review, the Service will begin development of a proposed rule to delist the species.

The recommendation was informed by a recently completed, peer-reviewed Species Status Assessment for the lynx, which compiled and evaluated the best available scientific information on the historical, current and possible future conditions for the Canada lynx. Over a two-year process, the Service worked closely with federal, state and academic subject matter experts to evaluate relevant scientific information on snowshoe hare population dynamics, climate change, forest ecology and other issues. Although climate change remains an important factor for the conservation of the Canada lynx, neither the Service nor the experts we consulted conclude that the lynx is at risk of extinction from climate change within the foreseeable future.

The Canada lynx was listed as threatened in 2000 largely due to a lack of regulatory mechanisms on federal public lands, which is where a majority of the habitat for Canada lynx was believed to be located in the lower 48 states. Since receiving ESA protection, federal land managers throughout the lynx's range have formally amended their management plans and implemented conservation measures to conserve the species. For example, all U.S. Forest Service land management plans in the Rocky Mountain region have been amended to include conservation measures for the Canada lynx.

Providing the Canada lynx protection under the ESA also prompted an increase in scientific understanding of lynx biology. Research, monitoring and conservation efforts conducted by state and federal agencies, tribes and academic institutions, helped refine biologists' understanding of habitat needs, distributions, population characteristics and potential stressors.

Given the outcome of this analysis, the Service will not at this time be completing a recovery plan for the Canada lynx. Today's recommendation does not remove or negate the Endangered Species Act protections currently in place for the Canada lynx. To delist a species, the Service must follow a process similar to what is used in considering whether to list species. The next step is for the Service to publish a proposed rule in the *Federal Register*, receive public comments, review and analyze those comments, conduct a peer review, and then announce a final decision.

U.S. Senator Steve Daines today applauded the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announcement that the Canada lynx may have recovered to the point where it could be delisted as an endangered species.

"This report is exciting news and the result of two decades of collaborative work between state and tribal governments, conservation organizations, sportsmen, landowners, and countless others who are committed to protecting and recovering the Canada lynx," said Daines.

"Secretary Zinke has done great work to ensure our endangered species can reach recovery, and I look forward to working closely with him as the delisting of the Canada lynx is considered so that management of the species can be returned to the states and our tribes."