

News Release

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Service Proposes to Amend Listing of Woodland Caribou, Southern Selkirk Mountains Population

Response to Delisting Petition Results in Proposed Changes to Population and Listing Status

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced that woodland caribou in the Southern Selkirk Mountains of northern Idaho, northeastern Washington and southern British Columbia require continued protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Service's action is in response to a petition received in May 2012, requesting delisting of the southern Selkirk Mountains woodland caribou population on the grounds that it did not meet the definition of a distinct population segment (DPS) under the Service's 1996 DPS policy. A DPS is a group of animals that are behaviorally and/or geographically discrete from other populations of the same animal.

After a review of the best available scientific and commercial information, and in an effort to define a DPS consistent with the agency's DPS policy, the Service now proposes to amend the current listing by recognizing a new DPS (the southern mountain caribou DPS) that includes a broader range of mountain caribou in British Columbia. The current DPS is listed as an endangered species under the ESA, with designated critical habitat. The Service now proposes to designate the new DPS as a threatened species, due in part to a broader range and larger additional local populations.

"The Service seeks to apply scientifically sound protection for this species consistent with our DPS policy," said Michael Carrier, the Service's Idaho State Supervisor. "Input from the public, along with scientific peer review, will ensure that we will do so, and can enable the Service to work toward the recovery of caribou in collaboration with our partners in the United States and British Columbia."

The proposed southern mountain caribou DPS includes the currently listed southern Selkirk Mountains population of woodland caribou that moves between British Columbia, northern Idaho and northeastern

Washington, as well as similar local populations in British Columbia. The proposed DPS is both discrete and significant due to geographic and behavioral separation from other woodland caribou.

The Service has determined that the 30,010 acres in the United States designated as critical habitat in November 2012, remain applicable to the U.S. population of the proposed southern mountain caribou DPS. Thus, if the proposed amendment to the listing is finalized, it would reaffirm the existing critical habitat for the DPS.

The Service will work closely with partners in Idaho, Washington, British Columbia, and tribes and first nations to develop and implement the best scientifically-based recovery actions for the caribou under the Service's 1994 caribou recovery plan and conservation strategy.

The Service will host several opportunities for public input during the public comment process, such as informational meetings and public hearings, and local community outreach. Information about meetings and hearings will be announced as soon as dates and logistics are arranged.

The Service will also seek peer review from knowledgeable individuals with scientific expertise to review its analysis of the best available scientific and commercial information and to provide additional scientific information to inform this proposed rule.

The 60-day comment period on the 12-month finding and the amended listing proposal will close on July 7, 2014. Public input and information must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the closing date. All comments and information received during the comment period will be considered, and as a result, the final determination may differ from this proposal.

Comments may be submitted electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Keyword box, enter Docket No. FWS-R1-ES-2012-0097. Hardcopy comments may be submitted by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R1-ES-2012-0097; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

For more information about caribou conservation, the 12-month finding and proposed rule to amend the listing, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/idaho>.

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