

News Release



Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office
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Fish and Wildlife Service Opens Comment Period on Draft Economic Analysis for Southern Selkirk Mountains Woodland Caribou Critical Habitat Proposal

*Open House and Public Hearing Scheduled for June 16, 2012
Comment period ends July 2, 2012*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today released a draft analysis that estimates costs related to the conservation of the southern Selkirk Mountains woodland caribou and its proposed critical habitat.

The caribou was listed in 1984 as an endangered species, and occurs in northern Idaho and Washington and British Columbia. It's considered to be among the rarest mammals in the United States.

The draft economic analysis (DEA) is contracted by the Service to an independent firm. The DEA estimates federal agency administrative consultation costs in the states of Idaho and Washington.

The public will have 30 days to submit comments regarding the DEA, as well as on the agency's proposed critical habitat designation. This comment period will close on July 2, 2012. If comments have already been submitted regarding the proposal to designate critical habitat, there is no need to re-submit comment.

The Service's Idaho State Supervisor, Brian T. Kelly, said, "Idaho's Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Boundary and Bonner County, Idaho, and others, have asked for additional opportunities for citizens to participate in public processes. We will be working closely with interested parties to gain as much information as possible from them about the draft economic analysis and the critical habitat proposal, which we will use to inform our final decision. We also want to ensure that Idaho and Washington citizens have opportunities to fully understand the draft economic analysis and the proposal."

Interested citizens are invited to attend a Service-hosted Open House information meeting on Saturday, June 16, 2012 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m at the Inn at Priest Lake, 5310 Dickensheet Road, Coolin, Idaho 83821. Citizens will have an opportunity to learn more about the DEA and the proposal by talking with Service biologists and managers at this information meeting.

A public hearing will be held the same day, also at the Inn at Priest Lake, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Citizens will be able to provide formal oral comments for the Service to review and consider for its final decision. Speaker registration will begin at 1:00 p.m. All oral comments will be entered into the official public record, and will be considered in the Service's analysis for final designation. If time does not permit full oral testimony, the public is encouraged to bring written testimony for incorporation into the record.

The Service and Idaho's Bonner County worked together to determine a date and location that would accommodate most citizens' schedules, which is the reason for a weekend event.

Persons with disabilities needing reasonable accommodations to participate in the public meeting or hearing are invited to contact Cathy Rogers at 208-378-5387, cathy_rogers@fws.gov, or 503-231-6263 (TTY). Reasonable accommodations requests should be received at least 3 business days prior to the meeting to help ensure availability; 2 weeks notice is requested for ASL/ESL interpreter needs.

The Service will continue to work closely with Idaho's Boundary and Bonner Counties, and Washington's Pend Oreille County, to share information with citizens on this proposal and discuss why we are designating critical habitat for the species and what this means for land-use activities in the area. Similarly, the public will be able to provide us with data, as well as share their concerns about the DEA and the proposal, which will be used in forming our final decision.

Please submit comments and other information only by one of the methods listed below.

- *Electronically*: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Keyword box, enter Docket No. [FWS-R1-ES-2011-0096], which is the docket number for this rulemaking. Then, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, click on the Proposed Rules link to locate this document. You may submit a comment by clicking on "Send a Comment or Submission."

Please note that if you are using the Federal eRulemaking Portal, the deadline for submitting an electronic comment is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on July 2, 2012.

- *By mail*: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R1-ES-2011-0096; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

We will post your entire comment – including personal identifying information – on <http://www.regulations.gov>. You may request at the top of your document that we withhold personal information, such as your name, street address, phone number or e-mail address from public review; however, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Comments and materials we receive, as well as supporting documentation we used in preparing this proposed rule, are available for public inspection at <http://www.regulations.gov>, or by appointment during normal business hours at the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office (208-378-5243 or Brian Holt at 509-893-8014). The proposed rule, maps and other information about the southern Selkirk Mountains woodland caribou will also be available online at <http://www.fws.gov/idaho>.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants, and to date has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation, as well as promoting the recovery of many others. America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered>.

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.