

News Release



Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fish and Wildlife Service Identifies Areas Essential to the Conservation of the Southern Selkirk Mountains Population of Woodland Caribou

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today its final critical habitat designation for the southern Selkirk Mountains population of woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*).

The southern Selkirk Mountains population of woodland caribou has been protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as an endangered species since 1984. It occurs in the Selkirk Mountains of northern Idaho and northeastern Washington and British Columbia.

The Service is designating 30,010 acres in Idaho's Boundary County and Washington's Pend Oreille County as critical habitat because they contain the physical and biological features essential to the conservation of the species.

The final designation, modified from the 2011 proposed 375,552-acre designation, is a result of 150 days of public involvement and extensive analysis that included public information meetings, hearings, comment periods, scientific peer review, and a reexamination of information regarding occupancy at the time of the caribou listing.

"Thoughtful inquiry and scientific information was presented to us by Tribes, citizens, federal and State agencies, elected officials and other interested parties. Because of this, we have a modified rule that adheres to policy, is responsive to issues raised by others, and most importantly, addresses priority habitat for caribou conservation," said Brian T. Kelly, the Service's Idaho State Supervisor. "We are most appreciative of the time invested by many during the comment periods, public meetings and hearings. We look forward to participation in the collaborative conservation of this species in the future."

Under the ESA, the Service is required to identify the most important geographic areas that are critical to the conservation of a listed species. The critical habitat designation requires federal agencies to consult with the Service on federal actions that may affect critical habitat, and prohibits federal agencies from carrying out, funding, or authorizing the destruction or adverse modification of the habitat.

Activities undertaken by private landowners that do not involve any federal funding, permits or other activities are not affected by a critical habitat designation. The designation does not affect land ownership or establish a

refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve or other conservation area, and it does not allow government or public access to non-federal lands.

The U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Washington, required the Service to submit a final critical habitat designation under the terms of a Settlement Agreement with Defenders of Wildlife, Lands Council, Selkirk Conservation Alliance, and the Center for Biological Diversity, which petitioned the Service to designate critical habitat for the caribou.

The final critical habitat designation; proposed rule; draft economic analysis; maps; public comments and reports are available at <http://www.fws.gov/idaho>, or by appointment during normal business hours at the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office's Spokane and/or Boise offices.

For more information, please contact Bryon Holt of the Service's Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office at 509-893-8014, or by email at bryon_holt@fws.gov.

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.

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