

## NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Mountain-Prairie Region  
134 Union Boulevard  
Lakewood, Colorado 80228**

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For Immediate Release**

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### **Service Reopens Public Comment Period for the Proposal to Designate Critical Habitat for the Canada Lynx**

*Comment Period Extended Until April 30, 2006*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today reopened the public comment period for the proposal to designate approximately 18,031 square miles as critical habitat for the federally threatened Canada lynx. Areas proposed as critical habitat include portions of northern Maine, northeastern Minnesota, the northern Rocky Mountains (northwestern Montana and a small portion of northern Idaho), and the Okanogan area of the northern Cascades in north-central Washington.

This notice reopening the comment period also provides information that clarifies the critical habitat proposal that was published in the Federal Register on November 9, 2005. Specifically, this notice provides more accurate maps and estimates of the size of the proposed units, particularly for the Northern Rocky Mountains and Northern Cascades units.

Areas proposed as critical habitat for the Canada lynx include boreal forest landscapes that provide beneficial habitat elements for the lynx, including snowshoe hares for prey and abundant large, woody debris piles that are used as dens. All proposed areas have recent verified records of lynx occurrence and reproduction and thus are considered occupied. The areas proposed for designation include:

**Northeast:**

Maine - approximately 10,633 square miles in portions of Aroostook, Franklin, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Somerset Counties;

**Great Lakes:**

Minnesota: approximately 3,546 square miles in portions of Cook, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis Counties

**Northern Rockies:**

(Montana and Idaho): approximately 3,549 square miles in portions of Boundary County, Idaho; and Flathead, Glacier, Granite, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Missoula, Pondera, Powell, and Teton Counties in Montana

**Cascades:**

Washington: approximately 303 square miles in portions of Chelan and Okanogan Counties.

The Service is seeking comments and information from the public on all aspects of the proposal, including data on economic and other potential impacts of the designation. Comments are also solicited regarding the inclusion of certain lands in the designation and the appropriateness of excluding lands from this designation that are covered by management plans that provide for the conservation of lynx.

Comments and information from interested parties will be accepted until April 30, 2006 and may be sent to the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Montana Ecological Services Office, 585 Shepard Way, Helena, Montana 59601. Comments may also be sent by e-mail to [fw6\\_lynx@fws.gov](mailto:fw6_lynx@fws.gov).

Critical habitat is a term in the ESA. It identifies geographic areas that contain features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and may require special management or protection. The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve, or other conservation area. It does not allow government or public access to private lands. Federal agencies are required to consult with the Service on actions they carry out, fund or authorize that might affect critical habitat.

The Canada lynx was listed in 2000 as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) throughout its range in the contiguous United States. The lynx currently lives in forest habitat all across North America.

In 30 years of implementing the ESA, the Service has found that designation of critical habitat provides little additional protection for most listed species, while preventing the agency from using scarce conservation resources for activities with greater conservation benefits.

In almost all cases, recovery of listed species will come through voluntary cooperative partnerships, not regulatory measures such as critical habitat. Habitat is also protected through cooperative measures under the ESA, including Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements and state programs. In addition, voluntary partnership programs such as the Service's Private Stewardship Grants and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program also restore habitat. Habitat for listed species is provided on many of the Service's National Wildlife Refuges, and state wildlife management areas.

A copy of the proposed rule and other information about the Canada lynx is available on the Internet at <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/mammals/lynx> or by calling the Service's Montana Field Office at (406) 449-5225.

The Service is preparing a draft economic analysis of the proposed critical habitat that will be released for public review and comment at a later date.

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 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources 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 and Native American tribal

governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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