

United States Department of the Interior



Fish and Wildlife Service

Ecological Services
Montana Field Office
585 Shepard Way, Suite 1
Helena, Montana 59601-6287
Phone: (406) 449-5225 Fax: (406) 449-5339



In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R6/MTESO/Canada Lynx Status Assessment

July 1, 2015

Dear Director Hagener:

As you know, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is conducting a status assessment for the contiguous United States distinct population segment (DPS) of the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). The lynx DPS was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (Act) in 2000 (*Federal Register*, 65:16502; March 24, 2000). We published a Recovery Outline for the DPS in 2005, and we revised the critical habitat designation for the DPS in 2014 (*Federal Register*, 79:54782; September 12, 2014).

Although we intended to complete a five-year status review of the lynx DPS by this month, the Service determined that we would first implement a relatively new framework, a Species Status Assessment (SSA; see enclosed fact sheet). The SSA is a structured, transparent, and scientifically-robust status, threat, and viability assessment that is intended to provide the scientific underpinnings for all determinations the Service is required to make in accordance with the Act (e.g., listing decisions, status reviews, critical habitat designations, and recovery plans). By providing all the species-specific science in a single document that can be updated as new information becomes available, the SSA report is intended to streamline, expedite, and reduce the size and complexity of *Federal Register* notices associated with determinations required by the Act.

Over the next several months, we will be coordinating with States and other partners and seeking input from objective, independent experts in lynx ecology, habitat, management, and climate modeling to assess the current status and likely future viability of lynx populations within the DPS. We are scheduling monthly calls with your department and the wildlife management agencies from other states within the range of the DPS to provide updates on SSA progress and to seek input at appropriate times during the process regarding the biological status of, and potential threats to, lynx populations within the DPS. Those calls are scheduled for the last Wednesday of every month (starting July 29) at 1pm, MTN time. Call in information is 866.822.7385, passcode: 5396168.

To ensure that our assessment will be as accurate and complete as possible, we will use the best scientific and commercial data available in the development of the SSA report. We hope to complete the SSA report by December of 2015 and then begin the recovery planning process so that we can meet the court-ordered January 15, 2018, deadline to complete a recovery plan for the lynx DPS.

Dear Director Hagener

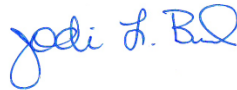
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We continue to welcome any scientific information (e.g., survey results, habitat assessments, modeling efforts, implementation and/or monitoring of conservation measures, verified observations) you wish to provide for our consideration regarding the status, distribution, and likely future condition of lynx and snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus*) populations and habitats in Montana. Please be aware that all data and information submitted to us including names and addresses will become part of the record for this status assessment and may be made public. Information should be submitted to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Montana Ecological Services Field Office
Attn: Jim Zelenak
585 Shepard Way, Suite 1
Helena, MT 59601

Thank you for your continued interest in Canada lynx conservation. We look forward to continued collaboration with your department throughout this process. If you would like additional information or have questions about the lynx DPS or the SSA framework, please contact Jim Zelenak at (406) 449-5225, extension 220 (jim_zelenak@fws.gov).

Sincerely,



Jodi Bush
Field Office Supervisor

Enclosure

Cc: Nick Wiley, Chair, Threatened and Endangered Species Policy Committee, AFWA
Jonathon Mawdsley, Fish and Wildlife Science Coordinator, AFWA
Gary Fraser, HQ