

ARD Briefing on Canada Lynx Species Status Assessment

March 11, 2016



- What are we doing and Why?
 - Implementing the SSA process to meet a court ordered timeline –
 - Recovery Plan for Canada Lynx by January 2018
- Prior to moving forward with recovery planning – the SSA provides analysis necessary to re-evaluate the status of the species
 - documented through a five year review

■ Background

- Canada lynx was listed in the contiguous U.S. DPS as a threatened species under the Act in 2000
 - -due to the inadequacy, at that time, of existing regulatory mechanisms
- In 2006, critical habitat was designated and revised in 2009 and 2014. Our current revised designation (2014) is under
- We completed a Recovery Outline (2005) focusing on lynx conservation in 6 “Core” areas.
 - These included the Kettle/Wedge area in Washington an area we no longer think is currently occupied by lynx and the previously provisional core for Western Colorado

- Currently, there are 6 geographic areas known to support resident lynx populations in the DPS:
 - 1. Northern Maine (and some parts of N NH and VT);
 - 2. NE Minnesota;
 - 3. NW Montana and NE Idaho;
 - 4. North-central Washington;
 - 5. Greater Yellowstone Area in MT/WY and
 - 6. Western Colorado

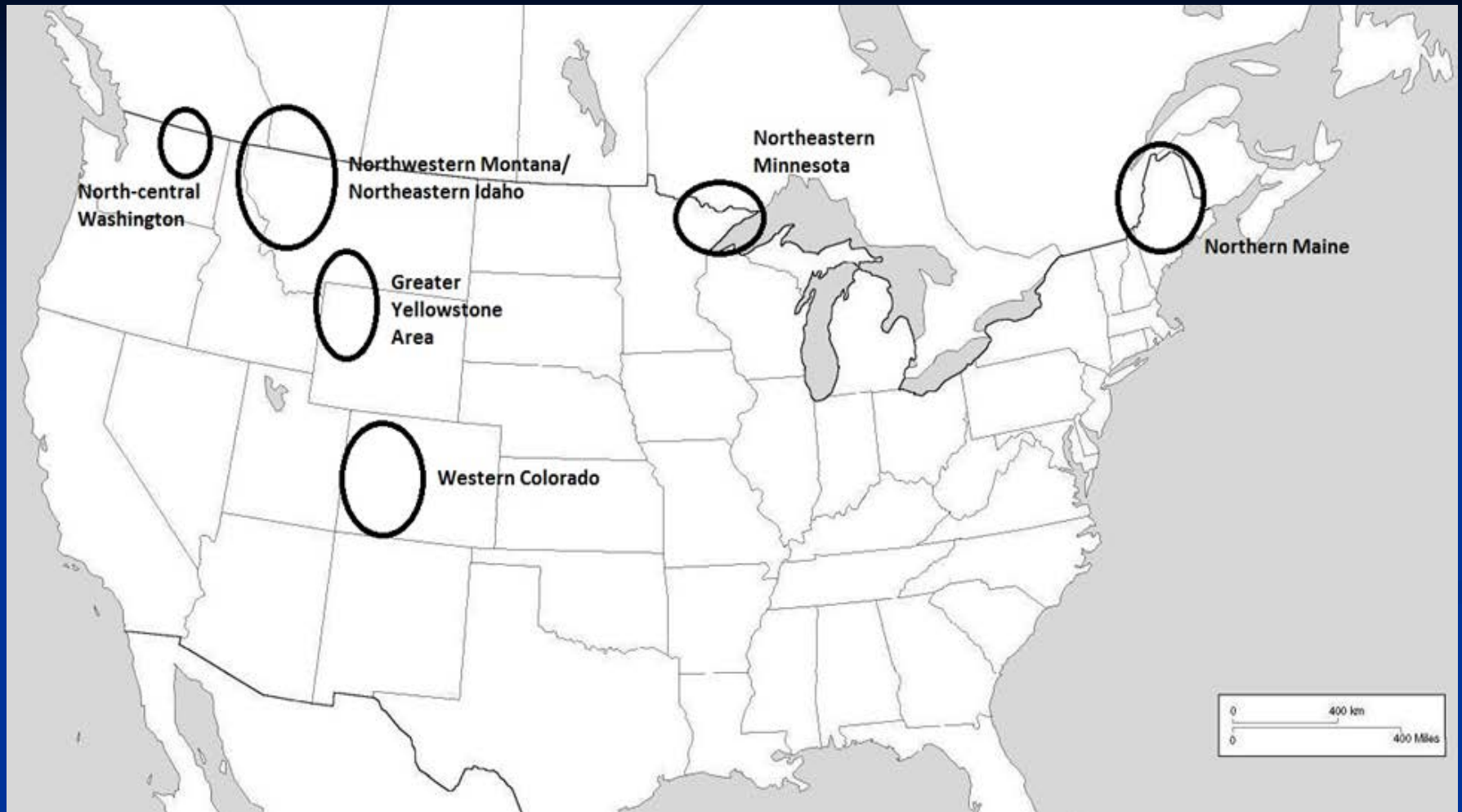
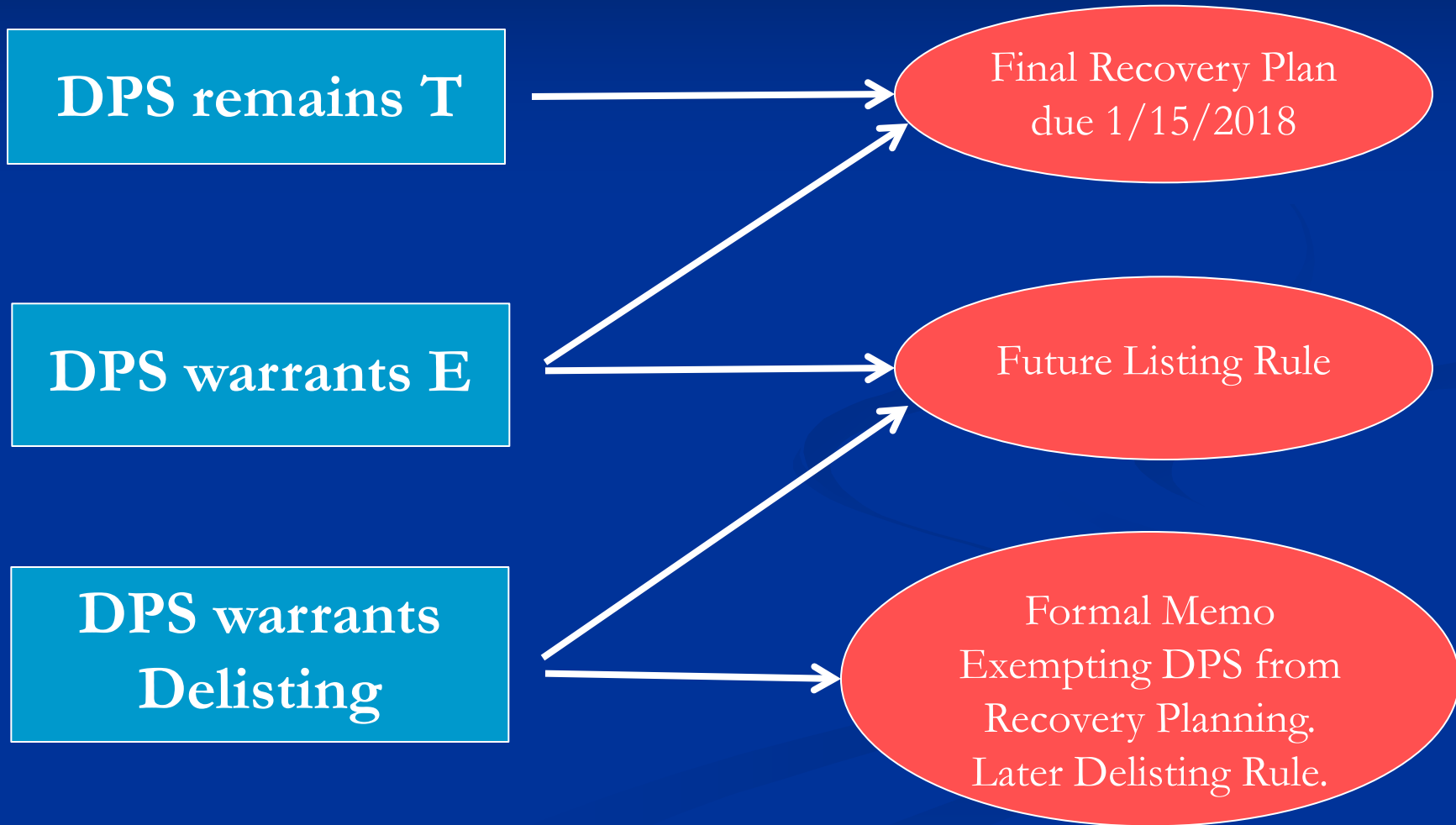


Figure 1. Six geographic units within the range of the contiguous U.S. distinct population segment of Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) that currently support or recently supported (GYA) resident lynx populations.

Key Points

- Announced the initiation of a five-year status review on December 8, 2014.
 - using the Species Status Assessment (SSA) framework.
- Information in the SSA used by FWS decision makers to inform:
 - classification decisions,
 - recovery planning direction,
 - and other determinations required by the ESA

Potential Findings



Key Points

- Through the SSA process we are:
 - Assessing the current status, threats and future viability of the Canada lynx DPS
 - Compiling and summarizing the best available scientific and commercial data, including empirical data, published literature, and expert input, and,
 - Prioritizing information and modeling to best evaluate potential future conditions, threats and viability

Key Points

- We continue to engage State, Tribal and other Federal, and Canadian partners and other stakeholders, as well as Service managers
- Typically through monthly coordination calls

Expert Elicitation Workshop

- In the fall of 2015, the FWS convened a workshop for scientific experts to address the current and likely future status of the Canada lynx DPS
 - Participants included state agencies, biologists from other federal agencies, and academic researchers to elicit input from experts across the range of the DPS
 - The resultant workshop report is one component of the SSA

Expert Elicitation Workshop

- FWS Lynx SSA team developed expert selection criteria based on professional credentials, positions, areas of expertise, and pertinent experience and coordinated with State and other partners to develop a list of candidate lynx experts and other subject matter experts across the DPS range
- These criteria ensured that only scientists with expertise highly relevant to workshop topics were selected, and,
- Selections were transparent, unbiased, and captured the diversity of expertise and professional judgments related to the topics.

Expert Elicitation Workshop

- Using the criteria, 19 candidates were identified and contacted to determine their availability
- 10 of whom ultimately participated in the workshop
- Information solicited from the 10 member panel addressed the viability of the DPS based on the 3Rs: Representation, Redundancy, Resiliency and climate science related to lynx

Expert Elicitation Workshop

■ Responses:

■ Representation

- Expert presentations and responses and discussion suggest few threats to the genetic fitness or adaptive capacity of lynx in the DPS
- Adaptability and evolutionary capacity of the DPS does not appear to have been diminished and is unlikely to become so, independent of threats that may impact the redundancy and persistence of lynx populations

Expert Elicitation Workshop

■ Responses:

■ Redundance

- DPS as a whole does not appear vulnerable to extirpation from a single catastrophic event.
- No catastrophic event that could result in the functional extirpation of the entire DPS and,
- No or a very low likelihood of functional extirpation of any of the individual geographic units due to a single catastrophic event

Expert Elicitation Workshop

■ Responses:

■ Resiliency

- Responses indicate that all 5 of the geographic units have >70% expectation of continuing to support lynx populations by mid-century (2050) but declining likelihood and greater uncertainty of continuing to support lynx populations by the end of the century (2100)
- Responses suggest overarching threat to lynx long-term persistence is climate change, anticipated to result in loss of boreal forest habitats and snow conditions favorable for lynx, although the timing and magnitude of such losses are uncertain

Expert Elicitation Workshop

- Overall message of the panel report
- What happens next with report?
 - Complete internal review. Do other Regions want to review before finalized and posted?
 - Post on internet and share with partners by March 25.

Continuing FWS Efforts

- Coordination with Scientific Applications
 - Requested assistance to develop a range of reasonably certain future climate change scenarios related to lynx and some measure of the uncertainty associated with several time periods
 - These included low, moderate and high emissions scenarios at mid (2050) and end of century (2100)

Continuing FWS Efforts

- We were particularly interested in:
 - How snowfall patterns, amounts/depths, duration, and consistency (powder versus packed/crusted) may change (as well as precipitation rates),
 - What projected rates of northward and upslope boreal forest migration might be - and lag between climatic and vegetative changes,
 - How climate change will affect fire size, frequency and intensity and forest insect outbreaks

Continuing FWS Efforts

- Determined that additional modeling – if needed- could take up to 6 weeks per area to complete, and,
- Reduction in uncertainty is only likely to be important in the end of the century (2100) information

Core Team Meeting

- FWS Lynx SSA Team met to:
 - make progress on the SSA report,
 - address outstanding questions or concerns,
 - identify decision points for managers and,
 - assign work to team members

Core Team Meeting

- Where are we now? What's next?

Revised Timelines

- Workshop Report FINAL -MARCH 18, 2016
- Species Status Report DRAFT, APRIL 15, 2016
 - Internal Review Complete APRIL 29, 2016
 - Peer Review (and State?) Complete MAY 15, 2016
 - Final Report Complete MAY 30, 2016
- Five-year Review
 - Draft MAY 5, 2016
 - Final MAY 30, 2016
- Draft Recovery Plan (if necessary) JANUARY 2017??
- Final Recovery Plan (If necessary) JANUARY 2018

Decision Points

- Do DMs feel we need better information to address likely impacts to lynx from CC?
 - If the answer is yes, are we willing to request the settlement date be changed to allow the time for this information? It would likely require an additional 6 months.
- Are DMs comfortable with the range of climate scenario years from the panel report?
 - Present, mid-century (2050), and end of century (2100)?

Decision Points

- Do managers want any recommendation from team in the SSA?
 - If the SSA document is supposed to be science only, the five-year review would be the recommendation from the team and all units would need to concur before it was finalized.
- When conducting Peer review of SSA, do the DMs want our State counterparts to receive it at the same time? If so, how do we treat their comments?
 - Similar to Peer review comments? Like public comments?

Main Messages

- We are moving along but we are behind in the development of the recovery planning process by 3 to 6 months
- If we do additional climate science scenarios –we will further delay the timeline by another 3 to 6 months & reduction in uncertainty only likely important for end of the century (2100) scenarios,
- In general, the FWS Lynx SSA Team feels comfortable with the conclusions ?? Outcomes?? from the expert panel workshop

Questions?

