

INTERAGENCY LYNX AND WOLVERINE STEERING COMMITTEE CHARTER

I. BACKGROUND: In March, 1998, an interagency lynx coordination effort was initiated in response to the emerging awareness of the uncertain status of lynx populations and habitat in the conterminous United States. On July 8, 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) published a proposed rule to list the Canada lynx in the conterminous United States as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. On March 24, 2000, the FWS issued a final rule determining that the contiguous U.S. Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the lynx is threatened. The Interagency Lynx Steering Committee (hereafter, the Committee) was formed in 1999 to provide interagency oversight and coordination of lynx conservation. At the October 26-27, 2000 Committee meeting, it was decided that another carnivore species, wolverine, would be added to the Committee's oversight due to concern for wolverine population and habitat status.

II. ROLE: The Committee provides oversight and direction in the preparation and implementation of management strategies and recovery/conservation efforts for Forest Carnivores such as Canada Lynx and Wolverine. Through the Research Subcommittee (see Section IX, page 2), the Committee ensures coordination with the Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) and the broader scientific community, as appropriate, in the preparation and implementation of research and administrative studies.

III. MEMBERSHIP: The membership includes Forest Service Wildlife Directors and Planning Directors from Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9 and a Forest Supervisor; Bureau of Land Management; US Fish and Wildlife Service Regions 1, 3, 5, and 6; National Park Service and invitations for participation to state and wildlife agencies and Indian tribes.

IV. COMMITTEE CHAIR: The Committee Chair is the Deputy Regional Forester, Northern Region Forest Service.

V. ADVISOR(S)

Research Subcommittee
Science Teams
Biology Teams
Planning Team
Communications Team

VI. INVITEES: The state wildlife agencies and Indian tribes within the historic range of Canada lynx and wolverine in the lower 48 states are invited to become members of the Committee.

VII. MEETINGS: Meetings are held every 6 months as agreed by the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the “Canada Lynx Conservation Agreement” (February 7, 2000). Additional meetings are scheduled as necessary.

VIII. CONFERENCE CALLS: Conference calls shall be scheduled monthly or as needed.

IX. SUBCOMMITTEES (there is only one at this time).

A. RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE

Membership

Chair: Dr. Len Ruggiero, RMRS, Missoula, MT.

Dr. Kevin McKelvey, RMRS, Missoula, MT.

Dr. Keith Aubry, Pacific Northwest Research Station, Portland, OR.

Dr. John Squires, RMRS, Missoula, MT.

US Geological Survey

Academia

State Wildlife Agency

Italicized agencies are memberships that were added at the Committee Meeting on April 30 – May 1, 2001. The Chair and existing subcommittee members are responsible for selecting the additional subcommittee members.

Subcommittee Responsibilities

1. Coordinate with land managers to identify and propose needed research programs to the Committee based upon conservation strategy and recovery plan elements.
2. Ensure that technically adequate study plans are in place for all Committee sponsored studies.
3. Establish ad hoc task forces to examine and report on special topics as requested by the Committee.
4. Review research findings and reports for scientific validity and make recommendations to the Committee on their adequacy or relevance for assisting management decisions. Circulate these reports for peer review when necessary.

X. OPERATIONS

A. RESOLUTION OF ISSUES

The Committee operates by consensus, whenever possible. Where the Committee cannot agree on a course of action or policy, the Committee Chair will make the decision. The Chair will take into consideration all points of view and, when appropriate, further consult with agency leaders prior to making the decision.

B. PROCEDURES TO AMEND CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Purpose

Conservation strategies such as the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS) August, 2000 may be amended when research results or other relevant information indicate there is valid, scientific documentation to improve conservation efforts by revising any aspect of the conservation strategy including the conservation program or management recommendations.

Process

1. The proponent of a proposal to amend a conservation strategy shall submit a written request for consideration to the Committee Chair. This proposal shall include all scientific evidence, reports, scientific publications or other documentation that support the proposed change. The Committee shall determine the best course of action and assign the review of the proposal to the appropriate teams.
2. The Research Subcommittee or Science Team shall facilitate the technical review and assess the scientific validity of the proposal. This review shall include a written recommendation regarding acceptance of the proposed modification. Allow a minimum of 60 days for this review.
3. The Biology Team shall review the proposal after receiving the Research Committee/Science team technical report and make a written recommendation to the Committee regarding acceptance of the proposed modification. Allow a minimum of 60 days for this review.
4. Forward the proposal and written recommendation(s) to the Committee for action.

5. When a proposed amendment to a conservation strategy is approved it shall receive a sequential number and be officially attached to the conservation strategy. The amendment shall specify which language in a conservation strategy is modified and the precise area of geographic application.
6. When a conservation strategy is amended, the Committee member agencies shall apply this new information in their operations as appropriate.

Definitions

Biology Team – Interagency wildlife biologists that apply scientific data and management principles to develop an assessment of risks to a particular species or group of species, thereby formulating the basis for management guidance that conserves species and habitats described in a conservation strategy. The team advises the Steering Committee on the merits of proposals to amend conservation and management strategies based upon scientific analyses provided by science teams or the Research Subcommittee.

Science Team – Scientists that review and interpret data to provide a scientific basis for management and conservation of species. The team advises the Steering Committee on the merits and scientific basis of proposals to amend conservation strategies.

Planning Team – Land and resource land management planning and resource specialists that advise the Steering Committee on strategies and approaches to amend or revise federal land and resource management plans to consider the new information in conservation strategies.