

## WOLVERINE CONSERVATION PROGRAM CHARTER

**Purpose of this Charter:** This document outlines the interagency process, products and implementation plan for the national wolverine conservation program

### Introduction

The Interagency Lynx and Wolverine Steering Committee (hereafter, the Committee) has initiated a range wide conservation program in the lower 48 states for wolverine. The USDA Forest Service is taking the lead for the Committee and the Northern Region-Watershed, Wildlife, Fisheries and Rare Plants Unit (WWFRP) in Missoula, MT is the designated Forest Service lead office. The Committee will provide administrative oversight and liaison with line officers in cooperating agencies.

*It is essential to develop and implement this Program as an interagency, cooperative process.* State wildlife agencies and tribal governments within the historic range of wolverine are included as an integral part of this effort. Participating federal agencies include Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS) and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Each of these entities has different regulatory processes and responsibilities, so it is expected that a high level of coordination will be required.

Characteristically, wolverines are solitary inhabitants of remote mountain ranges and males, in particular, are known to travel long distances. Unfortunately, very little scientific research has been conducted (much less than was available for Canada lynx) that can be utilized to assess potential impacts of management actions and guide development of a conservation strategy. For these reasons, a program of research and administrative studies are required before we can develop and implement a conservation strategy to guide wolverine management. This wolverine information gathering program will include several large study areas and necessitate a research program for a minimum of 5-years for completion.

### Wolverine Conservation Program Elements and Products

The framework of this Program is similar to the Canada lynx conservation program. Basic wolverine documents will include:

- 1- **Science Assessment** to be prepared by a team of research scientists; Team Leader: Dr. Len Ruggiero, Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS), Missoula, MT.
- 2- **Wolverine Survey Protocol** to be developed by RMRS.
- 3- **Conservation Strategy** to be prepared by a team of specialists; Team Leader: James Claar, Forest Service, Missoula, MT.
- 4- **Conservation Strategy implementation** through incorporation into management plans.

## Chronology

The Interagency Lynx and Wolverine Steering Committee (hereafter the Committee) reviewed the Forest Service approach for the Wolverine Conservation Program at their first semi-annual meeting on October 26-27, 2000 and agreed to accept administrative oversight for the Program. It was reported that the Northern Region (WWFRP) had received the assignment of Forest Service lead Region from the Washington Office. James Claar was designated National Team Leader and Dr. Len Ruggiero was designated Science Team Leader. This effort will be coordinated with any regional science advisory board established pursuant to new Forest Service Planning Regulations (36cfr 219.25(b)) The Committee requested a Charter that outlines the elements of the Wolverine Conservation Program.

## Proposed Work Plan and estimated completion dates

### Science Team Assessment

1. Summarize historic observation data.....summer, 2002
  2. Initiate RMRS field research and administrative studies.....2001
  3. Wolverine Survey Protocol.....initiate development of detection method followed by field testing..... summer/fall, 2001-2002  
(Update: An interagency agreement with Idaho Game/Fish Dept has been finalized with a temporary re-assignment of Jeff Copeland to RMRS to assist with wolverine survey development and coordination of fieldwork with state wildlife agencies).  
Items #4 and #5: A briefing and Steering Committee guidance are necessary before we proceed.
  4. Compilation and analysis of existing data from Idaho and British Columbia studies.....
  5. Assessment: scientific basis for wolverine conservation.....2002-2003
- Conservation Strategy..... Team Assembled, January, 2002  
Draft Strategy outline.....2003
- Delineation of occupied habitat based on survey effort.....2005
- Conduct Viability Assessment.....schedule to be developed
- Incorporate Conservation Strategy into Agency Management Plans.....schedule to be developed.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Interagency Lynx and Wolverine Steering Committee:** An administrative oversight group, chaired by USDA Forest Service Northern Region, Deputy Regional Forester Ms. Kathy McAllister with a current membership of Wildlife and Planning Directors from the Forest Service, field supervisors and regional program leaders of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and BLM program managers. This Committee prioritizes work schedules and serves as the liaison with line officers in cooperating agencies. State wildlife agencies and tribal governments within the historic range of lynx and wolverine have been invited to participate.

**Science Assessment:** This assessment will include a summary and interpretation of wolverine literature that will provide the scientific basis for development of the Conservation Strategy and outline research needs. An international team of research scientists, coordinated by Dr. Len Ruggiero, will prepare the report.

**Conservation Strategy:** This document will provide coordinated guidance for wolverine management and conservation on public lands in the lower 48 states. It will provide the foundation for individual project review, management plan revisions and viability assessment.

**Wolverine Survey Protocol:** RMRS will attempt to develop a standardized, scientific method to detect wolverine and map their presence or absence across the historic range. This field sampling will be conducted in a coordinated fashion across selected administrative units, similar to the ongoing national lynx survey.

8/2002

