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Washington state lists Canada lynx as endangered *Rare Cats*

Seattle – Late last week, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission voted unanimously to list Canada lynx as “endangered” under the state equivalent of the Endangered Species Act. This move comes as estimates for the state population of lynx fall to an estimated 54 individuals. The Canada lynx was previously listed as “threatened,” however population declines and habitat degradation have led the species to the brink of extirpation in Washington.

Although listed as “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act in 2000, endangered status under state law affords the species with additional protections from the state of Washington.

“Although we are saddened that Canada lynx in Washington have declined to the point where endangered species protections are necessary, we wholeheartedly applaud the Commission for recognizing that the lynx needs and deserves enhanced protections in Washington,” said John Mellgren, attorney at the Western Environmental Law Center.

Canada lynx, medium-sized members of the feline family, are habitat and prey specialists. Heavily reliant on snowshoe hare, lynx tend to be limited in both population and distribution to areas where hare are sufficiently abundant. Like their preferred prey, lynx are specially adapted to living in mature boreal forests with dense cover and deep snowpack. The species and its habitat are threatened by climate change, logging, development, motorized access, and trapping, which disturb and fragment the landscape, increasing risks to lynx and their prey.

“With increasing threats from climate change and development, it’s long past time lynx receive every possible protection; we commend the Commission for taking this important step,” said Bethany Cotton, wildlife program director for WildEarth Guardians. “Future actions to aid lynx recovery in Washington will have the added benefits of protecting habitat shared by many other species, and helping the state become more climate resilient.”

“With the absence of federal leadership on imperiled wildlife issues, it will become increasingly important for state agencies to take the initiative to protect and foster the recovery of iconic species like Canada lynx,” said Nick Cady, legal director of Cascadia Wildlands. “We are really encouraged to see the state of Washington take the reins and add increased protections for lynx.”

“The Kettle Crest has Washington’s best lynx habitat, and these protections will help foster recovery of the species in this important, and wild part of the state,” said Timothy Coleman, executive director for Kettle Range Conservation Group.

The Western Environmental Law Center, WildEarth Guardians, Cascadia Wildlands, and Kettle Range Conservation Group submitted [comments](#) to the Commission in support of listing Canada lynx earlier this year.

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