

CONSERVATION OF NATIVE CANADA LYNX IN NORTHWEST WYOMING: PROMISE AND PITFALLS OF AGENCY MANAGEMENT^{TWS}

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Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) were listed in 2000 as a threatened species, owing in part to a lack of provisions in agency land management plans for lynx protection and conservation. Effective implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) depends heavily upon commitment of federal agencies to enforce its provisions. We evaluated implications of ongoing and proposed timber sales and recreation management on a Canada lynx subpopulation on the Bridger-Teton National Forest in the Wyoming Range of northwestern Wyoming. Although distant from established lynx populations, historical records and distributional patterns suggest that lynx in the Wyoming Range represent an indigenous but geographically isolated population that persists, in part, as a consequence of past selective harvest of stands that were 'tie-hacked' in the early 1900s. Using a LANDSAT vegetation image and relocations of radio-collared lynx (1996-2002), we examined patterns of lynx habitat use and assessed changes to vegetation due to timber harvest. We suggest that past selective timber harvest (tie hacking) was important in developing late successional forests that mimic vegetation structure and characteristics found in boreal environments that appear important to lynx. We also detail consequences of continuation of traditional timber practices that reduce habitat for lynx and their prey. We identify shortcomings of USDA Forest Service management that impede wildlife laws and policy, erode ESA effectiveness, and weaken science-based resource management. We recommend steps for improving lynx conservation on public lands.