

News Release



Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office
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Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Critical Habitat for Southern Selkirk Mountains Caribou

Comments accepted until January 30, 2012

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today a proposal to designate critical habitat for southern Selkirk Mountains caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), an endangered woodland mammal protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The southern Selkirk Mountains caribou was listed as an endangered species in 1984. It occurs in the Selkirk Mountains of northern Idaho and northeastern Washington and British Columbia, and the entire distinct population segment (DPS) is estimated to include about 46 animals.

In total, approximately 375,562 acres are being proposed for designation as critical habitat. The proposed critical habitat is located in Boundary and Bonner counties in Idaho, and Pend Oreille County in Washington, United States. These lands are all currently considered to be occupied by the species, and no exclusions are proposed.

“This proposed critical habitat designation is required under the ESA, and it is the first of a two-step process. The Service seeks to gain as much information as possible from all interested parties in this step. We do encourage our federal, state and Tribal partners, and others, to provide comments specific to this proposal,” said Brian Kelly, Idaho State Supervisor for the Service.

The primary threat to the species’ survival is the loss of contiguous old growth forest habitats due to timber harvest and wildfires. Human activities such as road-building and recreational trails can also fragment caribou habitat and facilitate the movement of predators into the caribou’s range.

In 1980, the Service received petitions to list the South Selkirk populations of caribou as endangered from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and a U.S. Forest Service staff biologist. The southern Selkirk Mountains population of woodland caribou was emergency listed as endangered in northeast Washington, northern Idaho and southeast British Columbia in 1983, with a final listing in 1984.

Defenders of Wildlife, The Lands Council, Selkirk Conservation Alliance, and Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the Service to designate critical habitat for the species in 2002. A 2009 Settlement Agreement

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The ESA provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants, and to date has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation, as well as promoting the recovery of many others. America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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