

whether a population under consideration for listing may be recognized as a DPS: (1) Discreteness of the population in relation to the remainder of the species to which it belongs; (2) the significance of the population segment to the species to which it belongs; and (3) the population segment's conservation status in relation to the Act's standards for listing.

The DPS analysis is a stepwise analysis; significance is considered only when discreteness of the population has been determined, and the conservation status is considered only when both discreteness and significance of the population have been established. Discreteness refers to the isolation of a population from other members of the species and is based on two criteria: (1) Marked separation from other populations of the same taxon resulting from physical, physiological, ecological, or behavioral factors, including genetic discontinuity; or (2) populations delimited by international boundaries. If the population is determined to be discrete, we determine significance by assessing the distinct population segment's importance and/or contribution to the species throughout its range. Measures of significance may include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) Persistence of the discrete population segment in an ecological setting unusual or unique for the taxon; (2) evidence that loss of the discrete population segment would result in a significant gap in the range of the taxon; (3) evidence that the discrete population segment represents the only surviving natural occurrence of the taxon that may be more abundant elsewhere as an introduced population outside its historic range; and (4) evidence the discrete population segment differs markedly from other populations of the taxon in its genetic characteristics.

If we determine that a population meets the discreteness and significance criteria for a distinct population segment, we evaluate the threats to determine if endangered or threatened status based on the Act's standards is warranted. Endangered means the species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Threatened means the species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

In reviewing the taxonomic information on Mexican bobcat, it is unclear whether this subspecies is valid. If the subspecies designation is not valid, then we must evaluate the status of the listed entity in its range within Mexico and determine whether the listed entity meets the DPS policy, and

if so, whether this population of bobcat should remain listed. Although the petition did not address this issue, we will consider this question during our status review.

Petition Finding

We have reviewed the petition, the literature cited in the petition, and other literature and information available in our files. On the basis of the best scientific and commercial information, we find that the petition presents substantial information to indicate that the Mexican bobcat may warrant being delisted.

With the publication of this notice, we are initiating a status review of the Mexican bobcat to determine whether delisting is warranted based on its status and taxonomy. If this subspecies is not taxonomically valid, we will also evaluate if the population of the listed entity in Mexico constitutes a DPS, and if so, whether or not we should retain the listing of this entity. If this population does not meet the DPS criteria, we will then evaluate whether or not the population of the listed entity is endangered or threatened in a significant portion of the species' (*i.e.*, *Lynx rufus*) range.

Public Information Solicited

When we make a finding that sufficient information exists to indicate that delisting of a species may be warranted, we are required to promptly commence a review of the status of the species. To ensure that the status review is complete and based on the best available scientific and commercial information, we are soliciting information on the Mexican bobcat (*Lynx rufus escuinapae*) throughout the listed entity's range in Mexico. If we determine that the subspecies designation is not valid, then information on the status of the listed entity rangewide will, in particular, assist us in determining if the Mexican population meets the distinct vertebrate population segment criteria, or constitutes a significant portion of the range.

We request any additional information, comments, and suggestions from the public, governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, and any other interested parties concerning the status of this subspecies of the bobcat throughout its range in Mexico. We are seeking information regarding taxonomy, historic and current distribution, habitat use and habitat conditions, biology and ecology, ongoing conservation measures for the subspecies and its habitat, and threats to the subspecies and its habitat. We are

particularly interested in recent information on the taxonomy of the bobcat, and specifically whether *escuinapae* is a valid subspecies or whether it should be considered part of other subspecies. We also request any additional information that will support the DPS analysis of the discreteness and significance, as defined in our DPS policy (see Distinct Vertebrate Population Segment section above), of this Mexican population relative to the species as a whole.

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments and materials concerning this finding to the Chief, Division of Scientific Authority (see ADDRESSES section). Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular office hours. Respondents may request that we withhold their identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name or address, you must state this request prominently at the beginning of your comment. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. To the extent consistent with applicable law, we will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

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