

NEWS RELEASE



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**DON'T EXTEND BOBCAT TRAPPING SEASON IN NORTHERN ADIRONDACKS
ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION URGES STATE WILDLIFE BUREAU**

***Live Bobcats Too Valuable to Ecology and Tourism to Squander Even One;
Poor Population Estimates, Need for Predators Argue Against Two-Month Expansion***

ALBANY, N.Y. – The Adirondack Park's largest environmental organization today urged the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to cancel its plan to extend the length of the trapping season for bobcats in the Adirondack Park.

There are too few bobcats in the Adirondacks now and they are too important to the health of the park to justify a doubling of the length of the trapping season, said Brian L. Houseal, executive director of the Adirondack Council. If anything, he said, the state should shorten the hunting season to two months to match the current trapping season.

"A cat in the wild is worth a lot more than a pelt on the wall," said Houseal. "Bobcats play an important role in controlling populations of deer, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, rats, voles and other species that can cause widespread damage if their numbers grow unchecked. Predators, even small ones like the bobcat, are vital to the health of the forest."

Today marked the end of the comment period for the proposed changes, which were developed by the DEC's Wildlife Bureau. The plan calls for extending the trapping season for bobcats in most areas north of the Mohawk River from two months per year to four. Rather than a season of mid-October to mid-December, the season would run until mid-February.

"Bobcats are also important to Adirondack tourism," Houseal said. "Wildlife viewing is one of the most popular habits of visitors to the park. Bobcats are stealthy and reclusive, so sightings are one of the most prized and sought-after experiences for visitors, especially for photographers. It would be a grave mistake to allow them to be wiped out by doubling the length of the trapping season."

Houseal said the Adirondack Council would prefer a change in the proposed plan that would keep the current season intact for the Adirondack Park, the northern Champlain Valley and the St. Lawrence Valley, all of which are grouped together in the state's wildlife management plan.

In a letter sent today to the DEC's Wildlife Bureau, Adirondack Council Conservation Director Allison Buckley wrote:

“The bureau’s use of an estimated population of 5,000 bobcats within the state seems high and is not a sufficient number to justify increasing the length of the trapping harvest season. There is no indication that the bobcat population has or will increase significantly – or that an increase in population would be undesirable in any way within the Northern Harvest Area. The Management Plan describes bobcat harvest rates but refers very little to recent studies of actual populations in the Northern Harvest Area. A survey system would help understand the existing bobcat population.”

Buckley noted that it appeared the main justification for expanding the “harvest season” for bobcats was to ease DEC’s administrative oversight, not because it is the best plan for the survival and propagation of bobcats and other species.

“As a top predator, bobcats play an important role in a healthy ecosystem, preying on deer herds and controlling populations of small mammals, such as rabbits, squirrels and rodents. The *2012-2016 Management Plan for White-tailed Deer in New York State* describes the high impact over-browsing of deer have on forest ecosystems, the high number of automobile collisions involving deer, and an estimate of \$59 million in crop damage every year. As deer hunting decreases due to lack of interest, allowing bobcats to assist in controlling the state’s deer populations would be beneficial to the Bureau of Wildlife’s mission.”

The Adirondack Council is a privately funded, not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park. Founded in 1975, the Council carries out its mission through research, education, advocacy and legal action.

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