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Adirondack Council opposes extending bobcat hunting season

By Stephen Williams

The Adirondack Park's largest environmental organization is urging the Department of Environmental Conservation not to extend the Adirondack bobcat hunting season.

The Adirondack Council released its comments to DEC on the planned expanded bobcat season today, the last day for commenting on the state's draft plan to expand bobcat hunting.

State officials say the bobcat population has grown to as many as 5,000 statewide, and they want to expand the hunting and trapping season in the Adirondacks, and allow its hunting and trapping in other parts of the state, like the Mohawk Valley, where there's no season now.

Hunting advocates like the New York State Conservation Council favor the expanded hunting and trapping of bobcats.

But Adirondack Council Executive Director Brian L. Houseal said 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 season.

"A cat in the wild is worth a lot more than a pelt on the wall," Houseal said in prepared remarks. "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."

The state plan would expand the season for the elusive cat through mid-February each year. The season now runs from mid-October to mid-December.

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