

Times Union
February 17, 2012

Bobcat trap plan draws warning

Not enough animals exist to expand the season, Adirondack Council says

By Brian Nearing

ALBANY — The Adirondack Park's largest environmental organization urged the state Thursday to cancel plans for a longer season to trap bobcats in the Adirondacks.

In addition to the extended season, the state Department of Environmental Conservation would also open up a season on bobcats in an area going from the Capital Region, along parts of the Mohawk Valley, south into the Southern Tier and west to the Pennsylvania border.

In the Adirondacks, the plan would extend the bobcat trapping season 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.

"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 Houseal, executive director of the Adirondack Council. "If anything, the state should shorten the hunting season to two months to match the current trapping season."

In a letter sent Thursday to DEC's Wildlife Bureau, Adirondack Council Conservation Director Allison Buckley also questioned whether the agency's estimate of 5,000 bobcats statewide was inflated.

Currently, about 500 bobcats a year are killed by hunters or trappers, who prize the animal as a trophy species or sell their pelts for \$50 or more. By expanding hunting areas, up to 1,000 bobcats a year could be taken while keeping the population stable, the DEC proposal said.

Buckley said the plan relied little on recent studies on actual bobcat populations in that area.

Rarely seen by people, the reclusive cats need relatively large areas to thrive. In the Adirondacks, the average home range of a male bobcat can be up to 136 square miles, DEC said. Females occupy about a quarter of the area.

More parts of Albany, Saratoga and Schenectady counties would be added to locations where bobcat hunting and trapping is already allowed in the Catskills, Hudson Valley, Champlain Valley, Adirondacks and the Tug Hill Plateau.

Other counties to be added include Schoharie, Montgomery and Fulton, as well as Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Wyoming, Livingston, Allegany, Steuben, Schuyler, Chemung, Tioga, Broome, Delaware, Otsego, Madison, Oneida, Herkimer, Orange, Rockland and Westchester counties.

Read more: <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Bobcat-trap-plan-draws-warning-3337803.php#ixzz1meEQtrof>