

From: [Martens, Justin - FS](#)
To: ["Lewis, Carly"](#)
Subject: Piquett Project Lynx Determination of Effects
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 11:56:00 AM
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Carly,

The Bitterroot National Forest recently submitted a Biological Assessment (BA) for Grizzly Bear in regards to the Piquett Project. The BA did not include an effects determination for the threatened Canada Lynx because I misinterpreted the ***Programmatic Biological Assessment for Activities that are Not Likely to Adversely Affect Canada Lynx, Grizzly Bear, and Designated Canada Lynx Habitat*** (USDA 2014), and believed I could use the screening process for Lynx and submit a separate BA for grizzly bear. The following effects determination should be amended to the recently submitted BA in order to fulfill the requirements of consultation for the threatened Canada Lynx.

The current status, life history, and environmental baseline with regards to Canada Lynx on the Bitterroot National Forest have been well documented in previous biological assessments (McCart Lookout Defensible Space Project, USDA 2019) and will not be described further here.

The Piquett Project intersects two Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs), the Rock-Ward LAU and the Piquett-Black LAU. Design features and mitigation measures regarding the Piquett Project prohibit vegetation management treatments (i.e. prescribed fire, timber harvest, thinning, etc.) in stand initiation hare habitat or in multi-storied hare habitat (stem exclusion or other). The Project meets all Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction standards and guidelines (USDA 2007) and all other screening guidelines that were included in the ***Programmatic Biological Assessment for Activities that are Not Likely to Adversely Affect Canada Lynx, Grizzly Bear, and Designated Canada Lynx Habitat*** (USDA 2014). No other vegetation management activities, nor is any permanent road construction proposed as part of project activities.

Implementation of the proposed Piquett Project ***may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect*** Canada Lynx. This determination is based on the following rationale.

1. The project occurs in secondary, unoccupied lynx habitat. There has never been a lynx detections in the action area, and the project area is 67 miles south of the southern edge of the nearest designated Critical Habitat (core habitat). Transient lynx are not expected to occur in the action area during or after project implementation. Therefore, direct and indirect project effects to lynx are unlikely (discountable);
2. If disturbance of presumably transient lynx did occur it would be temporary and

insignificant, because disturbed lynx could disperse into the several nearby inventoried roadless areas in the West Fork Bitterroot River drainage. Therefore, potential effects of disturbance and displacement of individual lynx would be insignificant;

3. The project maintains connectivity of lynx habitat. Transient lynx would still be able to traverse the action area. Therefore, effects to movements of transient lynx would be insignificant;
4. The standards and guidelines of the NRLMD are met within the LAUs that contain the project and there are no permitted vegetation management activities allowed in field-verified lynx habitat.

In sum, effects of the project to transient lynx would be insignificant. This determination is a conservative estimate of the project's potential to affect Threatened Canada lynx as there have been no lynx sightings in the action area, and the effects as shown above are discountable or insignificant.

There will be NO EFFECTS to lynx critical habitat because no critical habitat is designated within the action area or the BNF (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service 2014).

Literature cited:

USDA Forest Service. 2007. Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction Record of Decision. USDA Forest Service, National Forests in Montana and parts of Idaho, Wyoming and Utah. 45 pp + references.

USDA Forest Service. 2014. Programmatic Biological Assessment for Activities that are not likely to adversely affect Canada Lynx, Grizzly Bear, and Designated Canada Lynx Critical Habitat, Bitterroot National Forest. USDA Forest Service, Region 1, Missoula, MT.

USDA Forest Service. 2019. Biological Assessment for the McCart Lookout Defensible Space Project. Bitterroot National Forest, Hamilton, MT. 43 pages.



Justin Martens
South Zone Wildlife Biologist

Forest Service
Bitterroot National Forest

p: 406-821-1213

f: 406-821-1211

justin.martens@usda.gov

6735 West Fork Road

Darby, MT 59829

www.fs.fed.us



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