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Minnesota / DNR vows action against lynx trapping

Deal with animal groups settles federal suit

BY DENNIS LIEN Pioneer Press

Two animal welfare groups agreed to drop a lawsuit against the state of Minnesota on Friday in exchange for the state's pledge to try to reduce accidental trapping of threatened Canada lynx.

The Humane Society of the United States and Help Our Wolves Live reached the out-of-court settlement with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The agreement, if a federal judge approves it, would end a federal lawsuit the groups filed against the DNR in July. They contended the agency wasn't doing enough to stop accidental trapping and killing of lynx. The state has had a lynx hunting and trapping ban since 1984.

Under the signed deal submitted to the court, the DNR will work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the two groups to reduce the likelihood of lynx trapping in northern Minnesota. The federal agency must approve any DNR plan.

"I think it takes us out of an adversarial role and implements a plan for us to work together to protect lynx," said Jonathan Lovvorn, a lawyer for the Humane Society of the United States.

It's unclear how many lynx are trapped in Minnesota, but federal records show more than a dozen of the cats have been killed or injured by trapping since 2002. Lynx once were common in northern Minnesota. But after years of legal trapping, their numbers declined dramatically, only to rebound in recent years.

A related suit by the Animal Protection Institute has not been resolved yet, said Mike DonCarlos of the DNR.

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