

Suit seeks to restrict Idaho trapping in Canada lynx habitat

By KEITH RIDLER, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Arguments in a lawsuit involving inadvertent trapping of federally protected Canada lynx and that could restrict trapping across much of Idaho are set for Tuesday in Boise.

The Center for Biological Diversity and three other groups say Idaho is violating the Endangered Species Act by allowing recreational trapping that sometimes catches the seldom-seen predator.

"There are just too few of these beautiful cats for Idaho to allow trapping that gets them caught, injured and killed," Andrea Santarsiere, an attorney with the Center, said in a statement. "In recent years there's been a dramatic rise in trapping for bobcats and other furbearers, and it's putting the survival of the lynx at risk."

Named in the lawsuit are Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter, Idaho Department of Fish and Game Director Virgil Moore, and members of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission.

The Idaho Attorney General's Office declined to comment Monday, citing pending litigation.

The Idaho Trappers Association has intervened in the lawsuit on behalf of Idaho. Officials with that group either declined to comment or didn't return calls from The Associated Press on Monday.

The conservation groups in the lawsuit said trapping in Idaho has increased from about 650 licenses issued in the 2001-2002 season to more than 2,300 last winter. The groups say that at least four lynx have been trapped in Idaho since 2012. One was killed after a trapper mistook it for a bobcat.

Specifically, the groups are asking U.S. District Court Judge B. Lynn Winmill to order Idaho to disallow lethal body-crushing traps and snares. The groups also want to limit the size of foothold traps in lynx habitat to an inside diameter of no more than five and three-eighths inches. The groups also want Idaho to require daily checks of traps by trappers.

The groups said the restrictions should apply to northern and central Idaho, and also in much of southwest Idaho. The groups also list a handful of areas in southeast Idaho.

Canada lynx weigh about 20 pounds and have large paws that give them an advantage in both pursuing prey and eluding predators when traveling across snow. They feed primarily on snowshoe hares and are believed to number in the hundreds in the continental U.S. It's unclear how many are in Idaho.

Also taking part in the lawsuit are Western Watersheds Project, Friends of the Clearwater and WildEarth Guardians.

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