U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

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West Coast Population of Fisher Will not be Listed Under Endangered Species Act

Impacts from habitat loss, pesticide use less significant than first thought; collaborative conservation efforts underway by states, private landowners, industry and federal agencies

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today announced that the West Coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of fisher does not face the risk of extinction now or in the foreseeable future and therefore does not require the protection of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service made its finding after thoroughly evaluating the best available scientific information gathered from the scientific community, the public and stakeholders.

“We arrived at our decision following a comprehensive evaluation of the science and after a thorough review of public input,” said Ren Lohoefener, director of the Service’s Pacific Southwest Region. “The best available science shows current threats are not causing significant declines to the West Coast populations of fisher and that listing is not necessary at this time to guarantee survival.”

About the size of large house cats, fishers belong to a family of mammals that includes weasels, mink, martens and otters. Fishers live in low- to mid-elevation forests requiring cavities in trees for rearing their young, resting and hiding from predators. The fisher’s range was reduced dramatically in the 1800s and early 1900s through trapping, predator and pest control, and changes in forested habitats by logging, fire, urbanization and farming. The species is now found in the northern forests of the United States and Canada as well as the Appalachian Mountains and Rockies and the Pacific Coast Mountains of California, Oregon and Washington.

In October 2014, the Service proposed listing the West Coast DPS of fisher as threatened under the ESA based on potential threats to its habitat from wildfire, some timber harvest practices and indiscriminate and illegal use of pesticides to protect illicit marijuana plantations from rat infestations.

These threats were subsequently found to be not as significant as previously thought. Although stressors exist at varying levels across the DPS, they are not causing significant impacts or declines to the population.

"There has been a substantial increase in support and interest by federal, state, tribal, and private stakeholders in implementing voluntary and proactive fisher conservation measures," said Robyn Thorson, Director for the Service's Pacific Region, which includes Oregon and Washington. "It is clearly resulting in a much improved long term conservation outlook for fisher."

A number of federal, state, tribal and private partners have come together in California, Oregon and Washington to conserve fisher habitat and restore the population. Ongoing conservation actions include implementation of Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA) to help reduce stressors. One CCAA in California between the Service and a timber company is protecting habitat on more than one million acres in 16 counties. In Washington, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the National Park Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, Conservation Northwest, the government of British Columbia and other conservation partners have been working with the Service to restore fisher populations since 2008.

"We look forward to continuing to work with our federal, state and local partners to help ensure future habitat for this population," said Lohoefener.

More information about this finding is available at: http://www.fws.gov/yreka/

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