

News Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Public Comment on Coastal Marten Proposed Critical Habitat Rule

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to designate approximately 1,413,305 acres of critical habitat in northwestern California and coastal Oregon for the coastal distinct population segment of the Pacific marten, also known as the coastal marten. The proposed critical habitat area for the species includes approximately 1,271,828 acres of federal, 25,875 acres of state, 26,126 acres of Tribal and 89,475 acres of private land.

The coastal marten is a cat-sized mammal in the weasel family. The species has lost over 90% of its historical range and currently exists in four small, isolated populations in northern coastal California and coastal Oregon.

The Service listed the marten as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in October 2020. Loss of habitat, catastrophic wildfire, exposure to toxins from unlawful marijuana grow sites and impacts from vegetation management were determined to be key factors in the marten's decline.

“Designating critical habitat helps the Service focus conservation efforts where they are needed most,” said Paul Souza, regional director for the Service’s California-Great Basin Region. “If finalized, the proposed critical habitat rule would help us work more effectively with our federal and state partners to preserve habitat that is essential for the recovery of this imperiled species.”

Critical habitat designation requires federal agencies to ensure that actions they plan to undertake, fund or authorize do not destroy or adversely modify that habitat. It does not establish a wildlife refuge, allow the government or public to access private lands or require non-federal landowners to restore habitat or recover species.

The proposed critical habitat rule will publish in the *Federal Register* on October 25, 2021. Publication will open a 60-day public comment period. The Service will consider comments from all interested parties received by December 27, 2021. Information on how to submit comments is available at www.regulations.gov by searching under docket number FWS-R8-ES-2020-0151.

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