

# News Release

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## **Elusive Coastal Marten Proposed for Protection under Endangered Species Act**

*Concurrent proposed special rule would exempt some routine forest activities from restriction*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to list the coastal distinct population segment (DPS) of the Pacific marten as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The coastal marten is a secretive cat-sized predator that only lives in coastal Oregon and northern coastal California. Coastal martens are stealthy hunters that lurk in dense shrub cover or areas with closed forest canopy. Major factors contributing to the coastal marten's decline include loss of habitat, wildfire and increased threat from predators.

The coastal marten historically occurred throughout the coastal forests of northwestern California and Oregon. These mammals currently exist in four small and isolated populations with a population size that could be as low as 400 individuals or fewer.

The Service evaluated stressors that may be impacting coastal marten populations, including loss of habitat, wildfire, changing climate, trapping, vehicle mortality, vegetation management, exposure to toxicants, threats from predators and effects associated with small and isolated populations. After a thorough evaluation of the best information and data available, the Service concluded that the cumulative impact of these stressors rises to the level that the DPS warrants listing as threatened.

If finalized, an ESA listing would mean coastal martens and their habitat are protected against harm (referred to as "take" under the act). However, the Service recognizes that certain forestry management activities associated with this species, while causing some take of martens, actually benefit population and are necessary for public safety. Accordingly, the Service is using the flexibilities inherent in the ESA to propose a special rule that would exempt certain forest management activities from the act's take prohibitions. Activities proposed for exemption include maintenance of existing fuel breaks, firefighting activities and habitat management.

The proposal to list the coastal DPS of Pacific marten will publish in the *Federal Register* on October 9, 2018. Publication will open a 60-day public comment period. The Service will consider comments from all interested parties received by December 10, 2018. Information on how to submit comments is available at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) by searching under docket number FWS-R8-ES-2018-0076.

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