



## United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office  
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-2605  
Sacramento, California 95825-1846



Subject: Final determination on the status of the Pacific fisher

Dear Chairman/Chairwoman/Chairperson:

Based on your Tribe's status as a sovereign nation and in keeping with our trust responsibility, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is sending this letter as notification of our final determination on the status of the Pacific fisher (*Pekania pennanti*). The Service is announcing a final rule to list the Southern Sierra Nevada distinct population segment (DPS) of fisher as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), while the Northern California-Southern Oregon DPS will not be listed.

In addition, the Service plans to propose critical habitat for the Southern Sierra Nevada DPS of fisher after a thorough analysis of available information can be completed. A proposed rule for this will go through the public comment process at a later date.

On October 7, 2014, the Service proposed the West Coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of fisher as threatened. The Service withdrew that proposal on April 18, 2016, concluding at that time the threats acting upon the DPS were not of sufficient imminence, intensity, or magnitude to indicate that they were singly or cumulatively resulting in significant impacts at either the population or range-wide scales.

On October 19, 2016, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) *et al.* filed a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief, alleging that our determination on the West Coast DPS of fisher violated the Act. Following many months of litigation, the court issued an order that vacated the listing withdrawal and remanded the Service's final determination for reconsideration. The Court directed the Service to prepare a new determination and submit it to the *Federal Register* by October 26, 2019, with a final listing determination submitted by April 25, 2020.

On November 7, 2019, the Service published in the *Federal Register* a) notice for a revised proposed rule to list the West Coast DPS of fisher as threatened under the ESA; b) the availability of a proposed section 4(d) rule; and c) reopening of public comment period for 30 days. An extended 15-day comment period occurred in December.

In the course of our review process, the Service determined that the formerly designated West Coast DPS should be evaluated as two separate DPS, the Northern California-Southern Oregon and Southern Sierra Nevada DPS of fisher.

The Southern Sierra Nevada DPS of fisher will be listed as endangered based on several factors, including loss of habitat, small population size and limited distribution within a fragmented habitat.

The Northern California-Southern Oregon DPS is not warranted for protection under the ESA at this time due in part to its widespread distribution, resilience and ongoing conservation efforts on public and private timberlands within its range.

Fishers are members of the weasel family, about the size of a large house cat, with thick dark brown fur and light brown to white markings on the chest and underbelly. They prey on small mammals and birds and are preyed upon by larger carnivores and birds of prey. Other mortality factors affecting fisher are collisions with vehicles and direct or indirect effects from use of rodenticides associated with illegal marijuana cultivation.

The Southern Sierra Nevada DPS of fisher is found in high elevation forests from the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park south to the Kern River Canyon, including Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern Counties, California. The Northern California-Southern Oregon DPS of fisher is found across a wide variety of forest types and ecological conditions.

The species is consistently associated with low- to mid-elevation coniferous and mixed conifer and hardwood forests with characteristics of mid- and late-successional forests (e.g., diverse successional stages, moderate to dense forest canopies, large-diameter trees, coarse downed wood, and large snags, tree cavities, or deformed trees). Throughout their range, fishers are obligate users of tree or snag cavities for denning and daytime resting sites with a high proportion of use occurring in late-successional forests. These forest characteristics occur through processes such as fire, drought and insect-related tree mortality, disease, and decay. There have also been concerted conservation measures efforts by external partners to improve fisher habitat on private and public managed forest lands.

We greatly appreciate our long-standing partnership to conserve sensitive, threatened, and endangered species, and we appreciate your participation in the listing determination process. If you have further questions, please feel free to reach out to Josh Hull, Listing and Recovery Division Chief, at 916-414-6742 ([josh\\_hull@fws.gov](mailto:josh_hull@fws.gov)).

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Norris, Ph.D.  
Field Supervisor

**Commented [KR1]:** This conflicts with the first sentence in the paragraph below. I think the paragraph below is correct, fisher are more associated with low to mid elevation forests. They have been observed at high elevation, but this is much more rare.

**Commented [KR2]:** I'm not sure what this is trying to say. These types of processes create diverse heterogeneous forests over time (which would then include living trees with cavities used for denning). But as written it sounds like we are saying that fire, drought, and insect related tree mortality results in cavities, etc. But fishers don't typically den in dead trees. It might be easier to just delete this sentence.