

News Release

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Celebrating Conservation: Partners finalize plans to protect Pacific fisher

Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it will list the Southern Sierra Nevada distinct population segment (DPS) of fisher as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This final rule is based on the best available scientific and commercial information for the species.

“We're grateful for the work our partners are doing to retain and restore habitat for the fisher,” said Paul Souza, regional director for the Service’s California-Great Basin Region. “Their efforts are critical to the recovery of the Southern Sierra Nevada fisher distinct population segment and the continued health of the Northern California-Southern Oregon fisher population.”

In November 2019, the Service published a revised proposed rule to list the West Coast DPS of fisher as threatened under the ESA. Based on the most recent data, the Service has now determined there are two distinct West Coast populations of fisher: the Southern Sierra Nevada DPS and the Northern California-Southern Oregon DPS.

“Voluntary conservation efforts by state and private timber owners have contributed to the Northern California-Southern Oregon population of fisher appearing stable within a large range of suitable habitat,” said Paul Henson, state supervisor for the Service’s Oregon office. “Over two million acres of private land have been enrolled under six conservation agreements protecting existing and promoting new fisher habitat, with three additional applications in process. The heavy lifting done by our partners greatly alleviates the need for regulation.”

Studies show these two populations are genetically different, and separated by a 130-mile geographic gap. The two distinct populations of fisher were re-evaluated individually, and listing determinations were made based on the threats, population size and distribution, and ongoing conservation efforts occurring within the ranges of each population.

“Both distinct population segments of fisher in California should benefit from this collaboration,” said Bernie Gyant, Deputy Regional Forester of the USDA Forest Service’s Pacific Southwest Region. “By working together we can make a difference for the species.”

Based on several factors including wildfire, climate change, tree mortality, predation, toxicants, collisions with vehicles and potential effects associated with small population size, the Southern Sierra Nevada DPS of fisher will be listed as endangered.

The Northern California-Southern Oregon DPS will not be listed, as it is more widespread within its range, and has more diversity in ages, male to female ratios and breeding success. These

factors, along with current and proposed fisher habitat conservation efforts on public and private timberlands, enable this population to maintain balance and withstand setbacks.

“The partnership between private timberland owners and the Service demonstrates how productive forestry can operate in a manner that protects and restores habitat for important species such as the fisher,” said Richard Gordon, President and CEO of California Forestry Association. “Today, stewardship of habitat is part of the DNA of active forest management and California’s forest landowners.”

Fishers are medium-sized mammals found only in North America. They are classified in the same family as weasels, mink, martens and otters. 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 multiple physiographic provinces that represent a wide variety of forest types and ecological conditions.

The final rule to list the Southern Sierra Nevada DPS of fisher will publish in the *Federal Register* on May 15, 2020. The document will be available at www.regulations.gov by searching under docket number FWS–R8–ES–2018–0105.

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