

# Fisher Management on Federal Lands in California

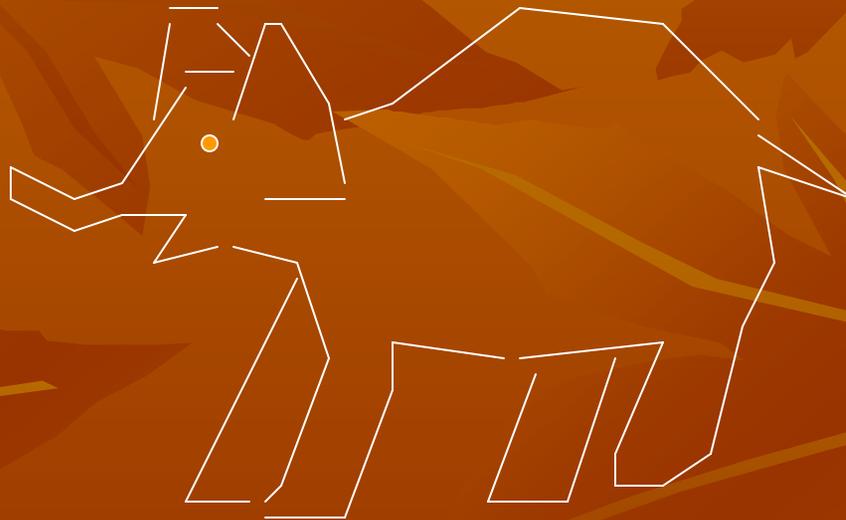
Conundrums for the Federal  
Biologist

# Information from the Biologists and Staff from

- Klamath National Forest
- California Regional Office
- Sierra National Forest
- Sequoia National Forest
- Six Rivers National Forest
- Shasta Trinity National Forest
- Mendocino National Forest
- Redwood National Park
- Arcata BLM
- Redding BLM
- Bunch of places in Oregon



**When you see an Elephant.....**



# Pacific Fisher

- **2004: US Fish and Wildlife Service finds that the West Coast population of the fisher may be a distinct population segment for which listing may be warranted**
- **Pacific fishers become a candidate for listing**

Photo by cynthia Rhines



# NEPA

- **National Environmental Policy Act**
- **Analyze and evaluate the effects of actions on the environment**

# **Forest Service Special Status Policy**

- **Maintain viable populations of all native and desired non-native wildlife, fish, and plant species in habitats distributed throughout their geographic range on NFS lands**
- **Develop and implement management practices to ensure that species do not become threatened or endangered because of Forest Service actions**

# Park Service Policy

**“to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” (Organic Act 1916)**

# **BLM Special Status Species Policy**

- **“BLM shall implement management plans that conserve candidate species and their habitats and shall ensure that actions authorized, funded or carried out by the BLM do not contribute to the need for the species to become listed.” (6840)**

The background of the slide is a solid brown color with a pattern of stylized, overlapping autumn leaves in various shades of brown and tan. The leaves are scattered across the entire area, creating a textured, seasonal feel.

**FOIA  
APPEALS  
LITIGATION**

# Your NEPA effects your neighbor

- Recent court challenges indicate that what our neighbors do or don't do; say or don't say in a NEPA document will affect us all.
- Presumptions/assumptions about fishers in one area may set precedence for management in another. Better have some good rationale for what we do.

# LEGAL DEFENSIBILITY?

- We don't need to implement the same strategies, but we do need to talk.
- We can't analyze the same data and reach inconsistent conclusions unless we offer rationale that will withstand legal challenge.
- Analysis must pass legal scrutiny. Write for the judge—as well as the decision maker and the public.

# Where are They?

- Do we need fisher location inventories?
- At what scale?
- Do you have the time or money to do local surveys?
- Or can we manage the HABITAT and presume occupancy?
- How do we get neighbor's data? Analyze at the population level?
- STATE—PRIVATE—OTHER AGENCY?
- What does inventory data mean in a project design?

# **We Need Information—and easy access to it**

- **Source of RESEARCH PAPERS—GREY AND PUBLISHED—and TIME TO DIGEST THEM**
- **Enter data into corporate databases such as OR BLM GeoBob or NRIS Fauna? Aubry's website?**
  - **Do they “talk to each other”?**
  - **Are they populated?**
  - **Do people know the systems?**
  - **Do we agree on how to analyze it?**

# Data Sharing and Consistency

- Much data is not electronic
- Not all data has been entered
- Neighbors don't share the same databases—or fields and rules for data entry
- Research data is published years after data was collected—and often not site-specific
- No common database meets all needs of users
- Different objectives/data entry rules
  - Data and habitat fields don't merge easily
  - Data quality is not consistent between agencies

**NEED**

**Lots of Both**



**PROACTIVE IS  
CHEAPER THAN  
LITIGATION OR  
LISTING**

# Management Guidelines?

Do owls = fishers?

Freel Redux

What are the magic #'s?

## Spotted Owl

Canopy Cover

Big old trees

Multi-story stands

Dead wood

Flying space

Understory prey habitat

## Pacific Fisher

% canopy? openings?

Trees how big?

How many? Over what area

# of snags/logs? Sizes

Prey habitat?

# Detailed Habitat Info

- If you can't save it all, what is the most essential?
  - How much canopy? What is the stand size?
  - How many trees? Species of trees?
  - How far apart?
  - If they are clumped—how big the clumps?
  - How big are the openings? Can one component substitute for another? How can you mix habitat requirements? Which is the MOST important?
  - What is the scale of analysis?
  - What about corridors? Permanent protection or short-term? How long?
  - How do you IMPROVE habitat?
  - How do you balance short-term fuels reduction impacts with long term catastrophic fire risks? How can you maintain populations in the meantime?

# Seasonal Protection?

- Do you impose seasonal protection?
- Is it important?
  - On what? What dates? How long?
  - How many sites need protection?
  - How do you find them?
  - How long are surveys “fresh”?
  - What if you don’t know where these sites are?
  - Does the protection ever come “off”?
  - What happens if you don’t?

# **RECOVERING DECLINING SPECIES IS A BIG, EXPENSIVE, AND DIFFICULT JOB**

**and all big jobs start with small steps**

- **HOW CAN WE DO IT WITHOUT LISTING OR A LAWSUIT AS OUR INCENTIVE?**



Photo by Micheal Francis photos

## ■ HOW to AVOID THE NEED TO LIST PACIFIC FISHERS?

**Develop and IMPLEMENT Proactive Conservation  
Strategies such as:**

1. **West Coast Fisher Conservation Assessment and Strategy**
2. **Sierra-Nevada Conservation Assessment (2003 +)**
3. **Response to Litigation & Injunctions Related to Occupied  
Habitat in Southern Sierras**

# Conundrums from the field folks

What do we do until we get a  
Conservation Assessment  
and Strategy?

# Efficiency—avoid redundancy

- We need to talk—and follow it up with ACTION:
  - Who is doing what (above, below, and all around) to avoid duplicating efforts
  - Share the work—and the research
  - Agree on consistent techniques and project designs to get more rigorous results
  - Avoid erroneous assumptions that “someone else is doing it” when no one is
  - Develop models and Test them
  - Cause-Effects Studies—take a RISK!
  - Develop Risk Assessments of Long vs Short-term trade-offs
  - MONITOR actions—what WERE the effects? How would you mitigate the project next time?

# TAKE SMALL STEPS and Don't Stop Moving

Develop Conservation Teams of  
Federal, Tribal, State, Private Parties

- Develop some **INTERIM MITIGATION GUIDELINES** for action projects
  - **TEST** them; Adapt; Revise
  - If we don't have all the answers, its still better than letting the field all manage independently

# WHILE WE “WAIT”

PAY A LITTLE NOW--- SAVE A LOT LATER

- **Research**
- **Inventory**
- **Data sharing**
- **Cause-effect studies**
- **Assess a project and monitor it to check—were you right??**
- **Get Managers on Board!**



# GET TO WORK

YOU AREN'T BEING PAID TO BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF YOUR DREAMS.

[www.despair.com](http://www.despair.com)

