

Northern California Southern Oregon Fisher Working Group  
US Fish and Wildlife Service office, Yreka, California.  
Minutes for Meeting of the 3 April 2006

Attendees:

Esther Burkett – CDFG  
Steve Burton – CDFG  
Richard Callis – CDFG  
Jennifer Carlson – CDFG  
Steve Criss – Criss and Co. Consultants  
Joe Croteau – CDFG  
Nick Dennis – Hearst Corporation  
Cindy Donegan – USFWS  
Laura Finley - USFWS  
Linda Hale – BLM  
Carole Jorgensen - BLM  
Rich Klug – Roseburg Forest Products  
Camryn Lee – USFWS  
Len Lindstrand – North State Resources  
Naomi Nichol – High Country Consulting  
Steve Self – Sierra Pacific Industries  
Keith Slauson – USFS  
Craig Tuss – USFWS  
Jeff von Kienast – USFS  
Russ Weatherbee - NPS  
Scott Yaeger – USFWS

Meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

These minutes are organized according to the original agenda.

1. Introductions. The meeting began with introductions covering affiliations and a brief overview of each members work with fisher and/or marten, both past and present.
2. Due to the time it took the Coastal Martes working group to develop their goals and objectives, we approached working group goals and objectives at the end of our meeting.

Goals and Objectives:

1. Need a research/management cooperative
2. Determine the range of this working group. We'll restrict it to where we know there are fisher in northeast California and southern Oregon
3. Increase awareness in Oregon

4. Education via meetings, field trips, training seminars
5. Produce map and corresponding database on fisher research/observations
6. Genetic analysis
7. Prescription/plan/recommendations to design habitat requirements
8. Develop fuels treatment prescription. Maybe a before/after treatment study in fisher areas
9. Monitoring distribution over time so we'll know if fisher populations are increasing or decreasing
10. THP guidelines and conservation recommendations. There may be an issue with cumulative impacts when a THP covers only a portion of a home range
11. Move towards the repopulation of the Sierra
12. Develop a standardized survey protocol, reasonably rigorous.
13. Define a source population for reintroduction efforts. Develop criteria for source population and how to measure/monitor after reintroduction.
14. Acquire more information on:
  - a. Foraging habitat descriptions and food habits
  - b. Diseases
  - c. Funding sources for research
  - d. Juxtaposition and quantity of key habitat elements
  - e. Is I-5 a barrier to fisher movement?
  - f. Distribution of fisher over time
  - g. The value of habitat at edges of suspected distribution
  - h. Northern extent of OR population
  - i. Habitat connectivity
  - j. Female life history requirements
  - k. Dispersal habitat/surrounding habitat
  - l. Description of landscape that supports fisher.
  - m. Understand what others are doing when sampling for fisher
  - n. Get info on "edges" of fisher population to determine true range and what borders their population distribution (I-5, large rivers, etc.).
  - o. Information on den/rest sites in interior habitats.

### 3. Update on Interagency Fisher Assessment and Strategy Team

- Objective is to write an interagency strategy to prevent listing of the Pacific fisher.
- Team is directed by Laura Finley of Yreka USFWS and Robert Naney with USFS
- Meet ~ every 6-8 weeks
- Scott Yaeger is working on putting together a website that will be tied into the Yreka FWS website
- This team is still in formative stage. They are working first towards an assessment/literature review/background document. Members are working on their own sections

- The assessment will lend itself to supporting the preparation of the conservation strategy

Comments and Discussion:

- Comment: It was noted that this team has little private representation, yet a substantial number of fishers are found on private land. Is there an avenue for private landowners to be more involved in the development of assessments/strategies?
  - Response: These documents will eventually be released for public review but it's too early to know when. The Sierra strategy that was just developed by Greg Green of TetraTech was for National Forest land only and documents were not offered for early review. This working group is/could be a forum to allow for strategy involvement. Three participants of the interagency team (Ester Burkett, Linda Hale, Scott Yaeger) were in attendance and Scott offered to be a conduit to bring concerns of the working group to the interagency team.
  - Comment: More input from private landowners will create a more complete document with which to make decisions.
  - Response: It was agreed that public input is important, but many private landowners do not want information about their lands released. Agreed that gray literature of all kinds should be sought out and included in assessments and strategies, to the extent permission to do so is granted. Also agreed that communication between federal team and private landowners is key to a comprehensive document.
  - Comment: The working group should request any and all information on detections and surveys for FWS site, gray literature, small reports, etc., as long as private landowners ok for release. All agree a central location for this info would be helpful.
4. Update on survey and research efforts since last meeting.
- This was discussed during introductions. There is a lot of current research going on, both within this group and in fisher research in general. Many have collared animals they are currently tracking, others are doing disease and genetic research. Many others are conducting presence/absence studies. Many attendees were there to discover what is happening with fisher research and management.
5. Keith Aubry's Central Data Repository.
- Keith Aubrey is building a site containing fisher survey and detection information on all lands in WA, OR, and CA. It is meant to serve as clearinghouse for this type of information. WA and OR are complete, CA is not, and the site should be accessible very soon.

Comments and Discussion:

- Comment: This site seems too general to use for management decisions. Scale is too broad. Aubry's information can't be used directly as a management tool, to manage habitats for fisher and make recommendations.
- Response: It is broad, but is a good first step in compiling data. The purpose was not to be used as a direct management tool. The site will also be useful when deciding where to put money to fill information gaps.
- Comment: Keith has not included "non-confirmed" sightings on this site. He has used strict protocol to decide which observations are confirmed. Some think his criteria are too strict and information will be lost.
- Response: Perhaps another site, or through discussing this with Keith, an alternate site can be developed that includes all records but ranks them according to reliability, or describes how they were obtained so that a reader is left to decide reliability.
- Scott Yaeger emailed the group the following citation, and will provide it to anyone else who is interested.

Citation: Aubry, K.B. and L.A. Jagger. 2006. The importance of obtaining verifiable occurrence data on forest carnivores and an interactive website for archiving results from standardized surveys. In press in M. Santos-Reis, G. Proulx, J.D.S. Birks, and E.C. O'Doherty, eds. *Martes* in carnivore communities. Alpha Wildlife Publications, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada.

- Comment: Does detecting a fisher using bait in a given habitat mean that habitat is valuable, or could the fisher have been drawn into unsuitable habitat from a distance?
- Response: Some argue that if the fisher traveled there to forage, it is foraging habitat. Others think that it does not mean it is fisher habitat.
- Comment: Is Aubry going to keep site updated or should someone do this? May be a full-time job. Maybe PSW?
- Comment: Useful info would include where fisher occur in heavily managed landscapes (BLM land for example). Would help narrow down effects of different management practices on them, what the critical elements may be.
- Comment: For CA information, CDFG keeps information on BIOS or Rarefind (databases). Could include this type of information and could include detection methods. California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) is also useful, but would be good to include other species, maybe not just special status. If there is funding, could be incorporated. Again, a full-time job.

- Response: BIOS voted likely to be most useful, and can include other agency and individual info, but is limited to CA. Bios could list different ranking of reliability, and could stratify results. Could specify metadata.

## 6. Standardized Survey Protocols

Keith Slauson gave a brief presentation on his efforts working towards the development of survey protocol, through survey goals and accuracy. The presentation focused on how to increase detectability in areas where the animal is known to occur.

- Protocol Design Factors included: survey duration, # stations, spatial distribution of stations, frequency of checking stations, and bait/lure type.
- Field Factors included: Bears, seasonal affect, bait removal by another animal, habitat at station, local population density, variation in home range size, and camera malfunction.
- Working on potential sex-bias factors, but so far have found none in marten.
- Tested three protocol scenarios on marten in three different areas in California. Came up with the probability of detection and confidence interval.

Anyone interested in more information can contact Keith at PSW in Arcata  
Comments and Discussion:

- Comment: Bait/type and freshness should be included in protocol development.
- Comment: Does freezing bait affect detections?
- Response: Keith thinks likely keeps bait fresher and the lure gives off the scent, but will look into it further.
- Comment: What about learning and “trap-happy” individuals and its affect on detectability?
- Response: Focusing more on differentiating areas with low-density from areas with no animals. Want to be sure that we can detect them if they are there.
- Comment: Might need protocol to be tailored to certain areas, based on density, geography, etc. May want to be able to pull traps when animal is detected, but follow protocol to the end otherwise.

## 7. Discussion of Westside BLM Western Oregon Planning Program

- BLM is moving away from NW Forest Plan and the fisher is one of the species they are concerned about.

- BLM is revising management as the result of a lawsuit, and many species will be managed to minimum standards.
- Carole is interested to know what impacts to fisher the new rules will have, and how to manage for them. Wants info from other management regimes and their effects on fisher.

Comments and Discussion:

- Suggestion: Some recommend to assume presence of fisher, unless really unknown if they are in the area. It is easier to analyze for them, then survey for them.
- Comment: Habitat information is lacking to make strong management recommendations for fisher. Bill Zelinski has published info on stand parameters that have fisher. Several of these also contain habitat information (typically at a smaller scale) but could help inform managers of the type of structures that may have some importance to fisher.
- Suggestion: A manipulative study in a managed forest, through removing certain elements and surveying for fisher, may be useful. However, this would be a long-term study.
- Comment. Rest and den sites are most important as stand-by-stand tends to be how forests are managed.
- Question: What other parameters would you measure if you were doing on-the-ground habitat analysis? Others have done some of these studies.
- Suggestion: Managers should start planning NOW for recruitment of den/rest trees in the future. Decide what trees to leave that don't currently meet the criteria, but that can replace these elements in the future.
- Question: How much acreage around each den/rest tree should be left when managing a forest?
- Response: No one knows.
- Suggestion: Would managing for females be appropriate as they are more restricted in their habitats and range? Perhaps using female home range size as conservation "block" may work. Do males and females use habitats in a similar fashion?
- Question: Are males around during the time kits are in dens? Would this model work on fisher? [what model?]
- Response: Yes...males are around when kits are in dens.

- Comment: An effort should be made to get genetic information when handling fisher to help determine relatedness, population size, native vs. introduced, etc. It may not yet be possible to separate individuals using genetics.
- Comment. The general consensus on Oregon is that it's important to increase awareness in the state, particularly with private landowners but also with the public. Fisher just aren't on the radar in Oregon like they are in California, and there are fewer incentives for landowners to be concerned with them in Oregon.

#### 8. Next meeting

The next meeting has been tentatively scheduled for June 6-7, 2006. It will take place at the Yreka USFWS Office, and will hopefully include a field trip to see "fisher habitat". More information will be provided as the date approaches.