

# News Release



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Oct. 6, 2014

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## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes to List West Coast Population of Fisher as Threatened Under Endangered Species Act**

### *Opens Public Comment Period Seeking Additional Information*

YREKA, Calif., — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today announced it is seeking information from the scientific community, the public and interested stakeholders on its proposal to protect the West Coast population of fisher as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

About the size of large house cats, fishers belong to a family of mammals that includes weasels, mink, martens and otters. Fishers live in low- to mid-elevation forests requiring cavities in trees and snags to rear their young and make use of cavities in the trunks of trees, snags and hollow logs and natural platforms for resting and security from predators.

Fishers have been part of forests of the Pacific states for thousands of years, but they have virtually disappeared from much of Washington, Oregon and California. In its evaluation, the Service has identified a number of threats to the fisher, including habitat loss and change due to wildfire, certain timber harvest practices in some areas, and the relatively recent and troubling threat posed by rodenticides.

“This is a complex and challenging issue because threats to the fisher vary across its range,” said Robyn Thorson, director of the Service’s Pacific Region. “We are actively seeking input from the public and stakeholders to help determine the magnitude, severity and scope of those threats in each part of its range in California, Oregon and Washington to ensure we base our final decision on the best information available.”

The proposed listing rule is on view at the *Federal Register* today and will officially publish Oct. 7, opening a 90-day comment period to gather scientific information and comments from the public and stakeholders. The Service seeks information on a number of topics, including the designation of the West Coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS) as a threatened species and also on DPS alternatives as described in the proposed listing. A DPS is a vertebrate population or group of populations that is discrete from other populations of the species and significant in relation to the species as a whole.

The listing proposal, which is based on the best scientific data available, cites the potential of direct and indirect exposures from the illicit use of anti-coagulant rodenticides on public and community forest lands

within fisher habitat as a significant threat to the species. Rodenticide use has been verified at illegal marijuana cultivation sites within occupied fisher habitat on public, private and tribal lands in California.

Although the Service does not know the full extent to which rodenticide exposure causes injury or mortality of fishers, rodenticide exposure in fishers has been documented in fisher populations in the Klamath Mountains and Southern Sierra Nevada, as well as in the reintroduced population at Olympic National Park in Washington.

The Service also indicated that some types of timber harvest and alteration of fisher habitat will continue to be a concern, and the Service is hoping to work with federal, state and industry partners to manage this threat.

“The timber industry has been a longstanding and valued partner in efforts to conserve the fisher to date and will continue to be so should the Service list the species,” said Ren Lohofener, director of the Service’s Pacific Southwest Region. “We stand ready to work collaboratively with federal, state and private entities to ensure a strong and healthy future for our Pacific forests, the livelihoods they support, and the fisher, while minimizing disruption to timber practices.”

Although the Service is not proposing a rule under section 4(d) of the ESA concurrent with the proposed listing rule, it is seeking comments and information regarding the applicability of such a rule for the species. Under section 4(d), the Secretary of the Interior may modify the standard protections for a threatened species with measures tailored to its specific conservation needs. Strategic application of 4(d) rules can help maximize conservation for a species while also reducing conflicts with people and economic activities.

Fishers are found throughout North America, but the West Coast DPS has been reduced in size, and fishers are now found in only two native populations within their historical range, which once covered most of the forested landscapes in California, Oregon and Washington.

In California, there are estimated to be 300 or fewer fishers in the Southern Sierra Nevada Mountains, and a population in the Klamath Mountains of northern California and southern Oregon could number from a few hundred to 4,000. There has also been a reintroduction effort in the Northern Sierra Nevada Mountains, where 40 fishers were released beginning in 2009. Fishers are considered likely extirpated from Washington and much of Oregon, with the exception of a reintroduced population on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington, where 90 fishers were released. An established population also exists in the Crater Lake area of Oregon where there was a reintroduction effort during the 1970s and 1980s.

Public comments will be accepted through Jan. 5, 2015. Specific guidance on types of information the Service is seeking and for submitting public comments can be found in the Federal Register notice at <https://www.federalregister.gov> (search for key word “fisher”), or on the agency website at: <http://www.fws.gov/cno/es/fisher>. Comments and information can be submitted by one of the following methods:

- Electronically at <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter FWS–R8–ES–2014–0041. You may submit information by clicking on “Comment Now.”
- Paper copy, via the U.S. mail or hand delivery, to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R8–ES–2014–0041. Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Va. 22041-3803.

The Service will also host a series of informational meetings and one public hearing. The public hearing is scheduled for Nov. 17, 2014, at the Red Lion Inn, 1830 Hilltop Dr., Redding, Calif. from 6 to 8 p.m.

Informal informational meetings will be held at the following venues for complete details):

- **November 13, 2014** -- Best Western Miner's Inn, 122 E. Miner Street, Yreka, California, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- **November 17, 2014** -- Rogue Regency Inn, 2300 Biddle Road, Medford, Oregon, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- **November 20, 2014** -- Arcata Public Library, 500 7th Street, Arcata, California, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- **November 20, 2014** -- Lacey Community Center, 6729 Pacific Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98503 Lacey, Washington, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **November 20, 2014** -- Lacey Community Center, Lacey, Washington, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- **December 3, 2014** -- Visalia Convention Center, 303 E., Acequia, Visalia, California, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- **December 4, 2014** -- CSUS Stanislaus, Faculty Development Center, Room 118, 1 University Circle, Turlock, California, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

In 2004, the Service determined protections under the ESA were warranted for fisher, but listing was precluded by higher priorities. The fisher was then added to the Candidate List. Today's announcement of proposed listing is part of the Service's efforts to implement a court-approved work plan that resolves a series of lawsuits concerning the agency's ESA listing duties.

The Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. The Service is working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, visit [www.fws.gov/endangered](http://www.fws.gov/endangered).

Additional information regarding the proposed listing is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/cno/es/fisher>.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/cno>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#), and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).*