



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Paul Henson, Ph.D.
Oregon State Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2600 SE 98th Avenue, Suite 100
Portland, Oregon 97266



RE: Letter of Intent to participate in Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for the Fisher

Dear Paul,

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has proposed to list the West Coast fisher as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service's listing decision is expected in April 2016. It is unknown whether fisher will be listed in Oregon but efforts are moving forward for setting up Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA). The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is writing to express its intention to promote the conservation of fisher in western Oregon using a programmatic CCAA, provided funding is available to do the work and other partners/landowners are supportive. The ODFW is responsible for protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife, and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

The fisher is listed in Oregon as a Sensitive Species-Critical Category, meaning the species is threatened with extirpation from a specific geographic area due to small population size, habitat loss, degradation, or other immediate threats. This is not a regulatory mechanism, but used to encourage voluntary actions to improve the species status and prevent species decline to the point of qualifying for listing. In addition, the fisher is also identified as a "strategy species" (i.e. low and declining or otherwise at-risk) in the Oregon Conservation Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy is the state's overarching blueprint for conserving fish, wildlife, and their habitat. The Strategy builds on all of Oregon's regulations, conservation plans, and voluntary efforts, by providing an implementation framework for a cohesive, statewide, non-regulatory approach to habitat and conservation. The Strategy defines key conservation issues that threaten species (including fisher) and their habitats and offers a menu of recommended actions to address those problems. Specific to fishers, the Strategy recommends maintaining habitats and structures (e.g., snags, downed logs) used by fisher, improving connectivity, and using the results of recent feasibility studies to guide specific conservation actions and management decisions for reintroductions.

An evaluation of fisher population numbers, distribution, and habitat use is needed in Oregon. ODFW believes that working cooperatively and collaboratively with Federal and State agencies and private forest landowners is the key for conservation of fishers in western Oregon. Actions

such as population surveys and reintroductions are expensive and complex, ODFW believes that combining the knowledge, expertise, and limited resources (i.e., staffing and funding) among multiple parties may be most effective in meeting fisher conservation needs. Concerns over potential land-use restrictions that may occur if the species were listed under the ESA will necessitate developing regulatory assurance mechanisms prior to any reintroductions to alleviate concerns and facilitate reception and conservation of fishers.

We believe there is an opportunity – better than a federal ESA listing – to promote and secure healthy and well-distributed populations of fisher in Oregon. Over the past several months, the Service, forest industry biologists, Oregon Forest Industry Council, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and ODFW have worked collaboratively to develop a Fisher CCAA. Under such a CCAA, participating landowners would receive regulatory assurances in exchange for conservation commitments. Along these lines, several large private forest land owners and ODF have already submitted Letters of Intent to you demonstrating their desire to implement these fisher conservation measures. To date this covers nearly 1.75 million acres of state and private forestland in western Oregon. These commitments would be in addition to compliance with the Oregon Forest Practices rules, which also contribute to providing fisher habitat on private lands through leave-tree and down wood requirements and protection of riparian management areas.

Today's challenging environment requires ODFW to focus its' efforts by establishing a comprehensive management strategy, including a long-term plan for how to accomplish key priorities, like fisher conservation in western Oregon. Without identifying and aligning resources to key priorities, we will be less effective at achieving our mission over time; key programs can be left without the resources to function effectively. ODFW only has the capacity to work on so many projects during this current 2015-2017 budget cycle. Unfortunately, the agency has a budget that has not kept pace with increasing expectations, and we are currently unable to do the work that the Service and non-federal forest landowners are requesting given our existing resources.

To remedy this situation, we are beginning our 2017-2019 biennial budget development effort, which will continue over the course of the next 9 months through the finalization of the Governor's Recommended Budget. To fund and administer the Fisher CCAA and other fisher conservation actions, ODFW will be submitting a budget request for \$1,000,000 (one NRS-2 and two NRS-1 field biologists, including equipment, services, and supplies) to fulfill this need. Dependent upon Legislative approval and funding, we would then be able to implement a programmatic Fisher CCAA and Enhancement of Survival Permit held and administered by ODFW. We believe this arrangement gives greater assurance to Oregon's forest land owners and managers, and will serve to increase participation, enhance long-term conservation benefits to fisher, and allow these landscapes to be maintained as working-land forests.

We look forward to the opportunities associated with the creation of the Fisher CCAA in partnership with the Service and other partners who may contribute to CCAA implementation, and other Oregon landowners committed to fisher conservation in the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,



Ron Anglin
Wildlife Division Administrator