

Mount Rainier National Park and North Cascades National Park Service Complex

Fisher Restoration Plan / Environmental Assessment
Public Review | September 2014



J. Hoffman

The National Park Service is seeking public comments on a proposed Fisher Restoration Plan / Environmental Assessment

Fisher Restoration

The fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) has been considered extirpated (absent) from the north and south Cascades of Washington State since the mid-1990s and is not expected to return on its own without human intervention due to geographic isolation from source populations and biological factors such as limited reproduction and dispersal rates. In 1998, the State formally listed the fisher as endangered, and in 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the fisher in its west coast range as a federal candidate for listing as an endangered or threatened species. Successful recovery of the fisher in both the north and south Cascades is necessary to downlist the species to “sensitive” in Washington State.

In order to contribute to the statewide restoration of this species, the National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to partner with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to reestablish self-sustaining fisher populations in the southwestern

and northwestern Cascades of Washington State, including Mount Rainier National Park and North Cascades National Park Service Complex.

The NPS has prepared a *Fisher Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment* that analyzes the potential effects of restoring the fisher to Mount Rainier and North Cascades National Parks and is now seeking your feedback through October 15, 2014. While this brief newsletter includes some information on the alternatives considered in the plan and environmental impacts from the proposed action, the full document is available at www.parkplanning.gov/RestoreFisher for your review. Printed copies of the document are available at several public libraries throughout the region including Bellingham, Burlington, Seattle, Tacoma, Enumclaw, Eatonville, Chelan, and Yakima Valley and at visitor centers in the parks. Limited copies are also available upon request by contacting noca_superintendent@nps.gov.

Plan Alternatives

ALTERNATIVE A: NO ACTION

The NPS would not partner with WDFW to restore fishers into Mount Rainier or North Cascades National Parks. No NPS funding would be allocated to fisher restoration, and no fisher reintroductions would occur on NPS lands. However, the State of Washington would proceed with fisher restoration in the southwest Cascades as outlined in WDFW’s *Implementation Plan for Reintroducing Fishers to the Cascade Mountain Range in Washington* (wdfw.wa.gov), except no reintroductions would occur directly in Mount Rainier National Park.

ALTERNATIVE B: PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The NPS would partner with WDFW to restore fishers into Mount Rainier or North Cascades National Parks. This would entail two phases *in each ecosystem*:

Phase I: Reintroduction (2 years)

- Capture, transport, and release 80 fishers from a source population in Central British Columbia (40 per year).
- Release sites, only some of which are on NPS lands, would be based on large areas of suitable habitat.

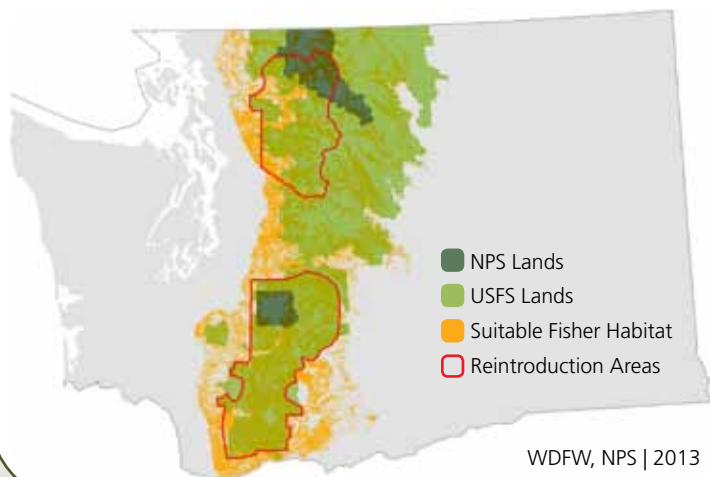
Phase 2: Monitoring (3 Years +)

- Monitor fishers during and following reintroduction via radio/satellite collars to understand their movements, survival, reproduction, and establishment of home ranges.

Access Plan @ <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/RestoreFisher>

The Pacific Fisher

Suitable Fisher Habitat in the Washington Cascades



FACTS

- The fisher is the fifth largest member of the weasel family in North America. Males weigh 8-12 lbs; females weigh 4-6 lbs.
- The fisher needs large live trees, snags, and downed logs for denning and rearing kits. Females may have 1-4 kits per litter.
- Fishers are mesocarnivores. Their diet primarily consists of prey including snowshoe hares, mountain beavers, and porcupines. But they are known to eat huckleberries, too!
- Mesocarnivores, which are more diverse and occur at greater densities than larger carnivores (i.e. grey wolves), play an important role in regulating “the abundance and distribution of a variety of other species through predation and competition” (Lofroth et al 2010).



Environmental Effects

WILDLIFE: The overall ecosystem would benefit from the restoration of the fisher as native predator-prey relationships would be more fully restored and sufficient habitat would remain functional to maintain viability of all species.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES: Impacts to species of special status are unlikely due to lack of competition for habitat and prey; however, some prey could experience minor, negative impacts from fisher predation.

WILDERNESS: Overall, long-term impacts to wilderness would be beneficial from restoring an extirpated species, but short-term negative impacts would occur primarily from the presence of collared animals and monitoring activities.

ACOUSTIC ENVIRONMENT: The acoustic environment would be impacted by aerial telemetry flights which would noticeably increase the number of annual administrative flight hours and noise over the parks for about three years.

VISITOR USE: Visitors would benefit from increased education and outreach opportunities associated with fisher restoration. It is possible, but unlikely, that areas could be temporarily closed to protect known fisher den sites.

NEIGHBORING LANDOWNERS: Although not anticipated, neighboring timber lands with suitable fisher habitat could experience negative impacts if temporary restrictions are placed around known, active den sites to protect females and their kits.

Share Your Feedback

Access and comment on the plan via the NPS planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/RestoreFisher>, or write to: Superintendent's Office, North Cascades National Park Complex, 810 State Route 20, Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284. The public scoping period extends through **October 15, 2014**.

Please note that your entire comment, including your personal information, may be made publically available at any time. Although you can request that we withhold your personal identifying information from public view, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

