

Timber companies agree to protections for Pacific fisher

By JES BURNS

Oregon Public Broadcasting

Federal wildlife officials have entered into agreements with timber companies and the state of Oregon to protect the rare Pacific fisher on nearly 2 million acres of forestland in Oregon.

Five companies — Green Diamond, Weyerhaeuser, Roseburg, Lone Rock and Hancock — have signed conservation agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over the past few months.

The fisher is a carnivorous mammal related to weasels and mink and once was widely found in the Pacific Northwest. But their numbers crashed because of trapping, the use of rodenticides and destruction of their habitat through logging and other development that removed forestlands.

The agreements puts on-the-ground conservation measures in place while still allowing timber companies to kill fisher though a provision called “incidental take,” a commonly employed allowance in federal species protection plans. The agreements’ conservation measures include things like maintaining a quarter mile radius of undisturbed buffer around known den sites, leaving downed trees in place to provide habitat and lengthening the time between cutting trees.

“The biggest part of these agreements are the measures that these companies are agreeing to do on their property,” said Fish and Wildlife Service Oregon supervisor Paul Henson. “To increase the retention of certain types of habitat on the property that they otherwise wouldn’t have to do under state forest practice regulations.”

Currently, privately-owned timberlands in Oregon are regulated under the Oregon Forest Practices Act.

“These voluntary conservation measures to protect the fisher, it’s something new to Roseburg, but something that we’ve embraced,” said Mark Wall, land and timber manager for Rose-



Greg Davis/Oregon Public Broadcasting

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burg Forest Products.

Currently, small native populations of fishers remain only in Southern Oregon and Northern California, although efforts are underway to reintroduce fishers from Canada in Washington.

Wall says the company’s surveys haven’t found any fishers living on their land in southern Douglas County, the closest Roseburg Forest Products property to the current known range. But the agreement provides an avenue for federal fisher repopulation efforts to include releases in Roseburg Forest Products land.

“We hope that the habitat that we’re leaving and starting to create for them

will one day lead to them becoming something you’ll find on our property,” Wall said.

Wall said the company is training its forest contractors to recognize fisher dens and habitat.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is currently considering whether to protect the fisher and its habitat under the federal Endangered Species Act. The voluntary conservation agreements could influence that decision.

“If you get enough folks to do it over a wide enough area of a species range, you could actually influence the conservation status of that species to such an extent that maybe you don’t need to list it,” Henson said.

If the fisher does get

endangered or threatened status, then the new agreements will exempt the timber companies involved from further regulation to protect the fisher.

Noah Greenwald of the Center for Biological Diversity says the agreements aren’t a suitable stand-in for Endangered Species Act protections.

“The Fish and Wildlife Service is working overtime to get these agreements in place in order to avoid listing of the fisher under the Endangered Species Act. It’s something that we and other conservation groups have been pushing for since the 1990s and (the service) has been resisting,” he said.

Greenwald says a sci-

ence-first approach is needed to ensure fishers recover.

Through the agreements the timber companies have also agreed to contribute close to \$90,000 in cash and supplies over the first three years. The funds will be used for fisher research and monitoring. After this influx of funding, Henson says it’s unclear how those

efforts will continue to be supported.

“Planning ahead three to five years is actually pretty good time frame for us. We’ll see how it goes and then we’ll continue to solicit funding, patch funding together as we’ve done in the past for not just the fisher, but other species that are either declining or on the endangered species list.”

Backers of driver’s license measure start state petition process again

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE

Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — After hitting a legal roadblock, backers of an initiative to undo a new state law that allows undocumented immigrants to get Oregon driver’s licenses filed a new petition.

Their goal hit a snag after the Secretary of State Bev Clarno said the original petition that supporters submitted didn’t comply with the state constitution.

The supporters’ first petition asked voters to simply repeal House Bill 2015, which Clarno said was inadequate.

Clarno said the petitioners needed to show how the law specifically would be changed to reflect a repeal. The legislation, passed earlier this year, affected several aspects of state law.

Oregon drivers have had prove their legal residence

to get a driver’s license since 2007. House Bill 2015 allowed Oregonians to use forms of identification that don’t establish residency status to get a license starting Jan. 1, 2021.

The new petition includes both the current and a revised version of four sections of state law affected by House Bill 2015.

Last week, one of the petition’s backers, perennial political candidate Mark Callahan, of Oregon City, had said that his petition campaign would fight Clarno’s interpretation.

Reached Monday, though, Callahan said he and the other chief petitioner, Angela Roman, of Brooks, decided to revise and refile a new petition instead, modifying it in ways to address Clarno’s concerns.

“We were kind of at a point where we could either fight it in court, which would cost a lot of money, or revise

and refile as a new initiative petition, which we did,” Callahan said.

Because they have filed a new, separate petition altogether, the campaign will have to gather an initial round of 1,000 signatures — called sponsorship signatures — again.

Callahan said they are at work gathering those signatures.

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Q: Do contractors in the state of Oregon need special licenses to work on residential homes?
A: Yes, all construction contractors and sub-contractors need to be licensed with the Construction Contractors Board (CCB) in order to perform construction related services for pay.

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