



2023 Pacific Fisher Summary Report

June 1, 2023



Cover photo: Pacific Fisher at bait pack in Bear Creek watershed.

Project Description

Title: Pacific Fisher Summary Report 2023

Purpose: Habitat Conservation Plan Monitoring

Date Initiated: March 1999

Projected End Date: Ongoing

Managers: Sal Chinnici, Director, Forest Sciences, and Brad Mauney, Lead Wildlife Biologist

Executive Summary:

The Pacific fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) is a medium-sized carnivore in the weasel family. It is one of 17 covered species of the HRC Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The Pacific fisher is no longer a Federal or State Candidate for listing under the respective Endangered Species Acts. For California, the California Fish and Game Commission on August 5, 2015, made the finding that listing the Southern Sierra Nevada Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) as threatened is warranted, and that listing the Northern California ESU was not warranted.

In November 2019, the Service published a revised proposed rule to list the West Coast DPS of fisher as threatened under the ESA. Based on the most recent data, the Service has now determined there are two distinct West Coast populations of fisher: the Southern Sierra Nevada DPS and the Northern California-Southern Oregon DPS. On 15 June 2020, the Service announced it will list the Southern Sierra Nevada DPS of fisher as endangered under the ESA. The Northern California-Southern Oregon DPS was not listed, as it is more widespread within its range, and has more diversity in ages, male to female ratios and breeding success. The fisher also remains a California Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern.

The HCP conservation strategy for the Pacific fisher is a combination of a habitat-based approach with an additional structural component element. The management objective is to maintain enough suitable habitat to contribute to a sustainable population of the species in the northern California coastal province. Conservation measures include retention of late seral habitat, aquatic resource protection, measures to retain and recruit habitat structural components, and old growth habitat reserves (i.e., the Marbled Murrelet Conservation Areas or MMCAs).

Monitoring for this species has been through forest carnivore surveys to establish continued occupancy of HRC lands and tracking of seral stage distribution in Watershed Assessment Areas (WAAs) as discussed below. No surveys were conducted during the 2022-2023 period. There were two incidental detections recorded during that time, one in the Yager-Lawrence watershed, and one in the upper Bear Creek watershed (Figure 1). Here we include the habitat summary information for your review. No changes in the monitoring strategy are recommended at this time.

Sal Chinnici



Director, Forest Sciences

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Habitat Summary

Regarding maintenance of habitat for the Pacific fisher, the HCP states:

“Retention of late seral habitat on the ownership through the life of the permit is expected to provide sufficient habitat in terms of quantity, quality, and distribution to contribute to a viable population. Channel Migration Zones (CMZs) and Riparian Management Zones (RMZs) are expected to provide connectivity across the landscape. In many locations, CMZs and RMZs will intersect with other RMZs or be augmented by habitat subject to silvicultural restrictions (e.g., NSO activity sites, mass-wasting sites, or steep slopes adjacent to RMZs). These areas, MMCAs, and adjoining public lands will form an interconnecting network of habitat which is expected to provide opportunities for denning and resting sites in the Humboldt, Yager, and Van Duzen WAAs. HRC land within the Bear, Mattole, and Eel WAAs is not expected to provide blocks of late seral habitat through the life of the permit. Late seral and old growth habitat on public lands adjacent to HRC ownership in these two WAAs is expected to provide suitable habitat for the species.

The conservation measures to retain and recruit habitat structural components within and outside of RMZs across the ownership is expected to provide older forest legacies in younger stands when these stands reach a mid-successional seral stage. These legacy components are expected to provide suitable substrate for Pacific fisher denning and resting sites.”

The quantity and distribution of late seral habitat as of January 2023, according to stand inventory information as cross-walked to California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CWHR) types, and thus seral stage for the Watershed Assessment Areas (WAAs), is shown in Table 1. HRC’s HCP commitment is to maintain at least 10% late seral of forested lands by WAA (HCP 6.11). CMZs, RMZs, NSO activity sites, mass-wasting sites, and steep slope areas are tracked separately through other HCP programs and applied on each Timber Harvesting Plan (THP). In addition, the retention and recruitment of habitat structural components are tracked via individual THPs.

All WAAs currently meet the requirement of at least 10% of forested lands as late seral habitat (Table 1). All WAAs exhibited a decrease in percentage of late seral habitat from January 2022. Ongoing forest inventory work on HRC lands is likely to result in further changes via harvest and growth, which will be in our 2024 summary report.

Pacific fisher habitat should also benefit over time as a result of the HRC conservation measure of retention of all old growth trees meeting the company’s policy, and use of primarily uneven-aged

silviculture, two additional measures not contemplated during the writing of the HCP and Biological Opinion.

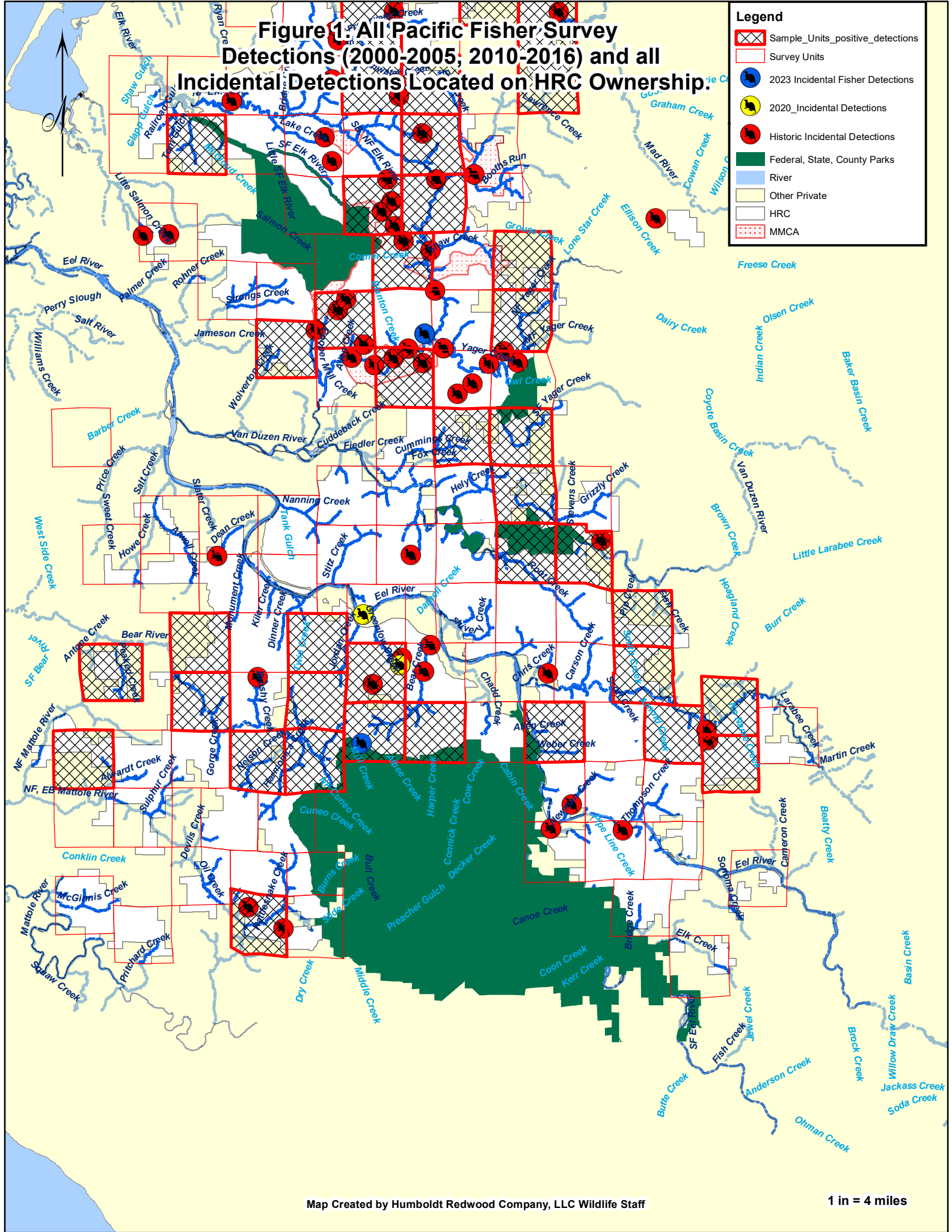
In addition, HRC continues to designate stands meeting the definition of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) according to the requirements of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, including an approximately 200 acre late seral forest on the north side of Long Ridge in the North Fork of the Mattole River watershed.

Table 1. Seral Types by acres in Watershed Assessment Areas (WAA) as of January 2023.

WAA	Grass	Hardwood	Open	Young	Mid	Late	Totals	% Late Seral*
Humboldt Bay	0	335	322	12,705	17,613	7,310	38,285	19.09
Yager Creek	66	505	738	17,396	10,300	3,867	32,870	11.79
Van Duzen	0	360	804	7,689	11,634	3,545	24,032	14.75
Eel River	561	5,477	2,334	29,093	23,786	13,377	74,628	18.06
Bear/Mattole	3,298	10,356	620	7,331	3,895	9,744	35,244	30.50
Mad River	172	1,010	82	359	552	1,091	3,265	35.27
Total	4,096	18,042	4,900	74,573	67,779	38,934	208,325	

*Percent of forested lands (i.e., excluding grasslands, HCP 6.11.2.1)

Figure 1: All Pacific Fisher Survey Detections (2000-2005, 2010-2016) and all Incidental Detections Located on HRC Ownership.



Legend

- Sample_Units_positive_detections
- Survey Units
- 2023 Incidental Fisher Detections
- 2020 Incidental Detections
- Historic Incidental Detections
- Federal, State, County Parks
- River
- Other Private
- HRC
- MMCA