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LAWSUIT FILED TO PROTECT THE PACIFIC FISHER
Pacific fisher and old-growth trees in the Sierra Nevada

Fresno, CA: Unite the Parks, the John Muir Project, and Sequoia ForestKeeper are jointly suing the Forest Service (USFS) and the Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for violations of the Endangered Species Act regarding the Southern Sierra Nevada Distinct Population Segment of the Pacific fisher.



The Pacific fisher, a tree-dwelling carnivore, was listed as endangered in May of 2020; since then, the federal agencies have moved forward on plans to log in its remaining habitat, threatening the species with extinction. There were approximately 100 to 300 fishers left in the range, at last count, and population estimates were made prior to the recent drought and beetle-kill, when the fisher lost nearly 40 percent of its habitat.

In 2020, two major fires swept through the Pacific fisher's remaining habitat, burning more than half a million acres, further weakening an already fragile forest ecosystem. The Creek fire in the Sierra National Forest burned about 379,000 acres and the SQF Complex fire burned about 179,000 acres in the Sequoia National Forest. Conditions are now critical.

The Pacific fisher needs large, living old growth trees and snags, an interconnected landscape, and brushy understory cover (native plant species). If successful, the lawsuit could help protect remaining old growth trees (less than 12% remain in the Sierra Nevada), while preventing future fires. "The Pacific fisher listing might help our forests to recover from logging and create a fire-safe future for the area," said Deanna Wulff, Executive Director of Unite the Parks. "We hope to protect the fisher, mountain communities, and our last large living trees."

Current logging and vegetation management practices continue to remove old growth trees, fragment habitat, and threaten the fisher, while increasing the likelihood of large high-severity fires, like the ones which just occurred.

Attorney Deborah Sivas of the Stanford Environmental Law Clinic represents Unite the Parks, and Attorney Rene Voss represents the John Muir Project and Sequoia ForestKeeper.

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