FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FISHER REINTRODUCTION PLAN/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Olympic National Park, Washington
October, 2007

This finding of no significant impact (FONSI), the environmental assessment (EA), and its attached errata constitute the record of the environmental impact analysis and decision-making process for this resource management project. The National Park Service (NPS) will implement alternative B – Reintroduce Fishers into Olympic National Park Using Translocation, as described in the EA, which was identified in the EA as the preferred alternative and the environmentally preferred alternative.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR FEDERAL ACTION

The purpose of this plan / environmental assessment is to contribute to the statewide restoration of fishers and to help fulfill NPS policies to restore extirpated native species by establishing a self-sustaining fisher population in Olympic National Park.

Need for Action

Olympic National Park is 95% designated wilderness; without fishers a key wilderness value is absent. Because reintroductions require the translocation of individuals from a source population, action is needed at this time because opportunities for genetically similar source populations are available now, but may decrease in the near future. The following further define the need for taking action:

1. Fishers are native to Washington State, including Olympic National Park, but have been extirpated.
2. Washington State has a stewardship responsibility to protect, restore, and enhance native wildlife populations and their habitat, in accordance with policies of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).
3. Under the NPS Management Policies 2006 (sec. 4.1.5 and 4.4.2.2), the NPS will strive to restore the biological and physical components of natural systems in parks, including restoring native plants and animals.
4. Olympic National Park is 95% designated wilderness. It is the policy of the NPS (NPS Management Policies 2006, sec. 6.3.7) to recognize wilderness as a composite resource with interrelated parts. Indigenous species are essential components of wilderness and the wilderness experience. Without fishers a key wilderness value is missing from Olympic National Park.
5. Olympic National Park was established in part to provide permanent protection to indigenous wildlife (House Report No. 2247, 1938).
6. Recent analyses by WDFW identified the Olympic Peninsula as the best place to initiate fisher restoration in Washington State.

Objectives in Taking Action

The following objectives were developed for this plan.

1. Engage and inform the public about the restoration effort and the role of the fisher in the ecosystem, and as contributor to wilderness character.
2. Establish a fisher population as genetically similar as possible to the population that originally occupied the Olympic Peninsula (NPS Management Policies 2006, sec. 4.4.1.2).
3. Promote the establishment of a self-sustaining fisher population.
4. Promote the occupation of suitable habitat throughout the Park, including wilderness.
5. Maintain a fisher population that would persist for an extended time (at least 8 to 10 generations).

6. Maintain a fisher population that could be a possible source for reintroductions to restore fishers in other areas of the state, including other suitable National Park System units.
7. Gather information about fisher habitat use, movement, and survival that would be used to guide and define future fisher conservation efforts.
8. Contribute to meeting the state recovery plan objectives.

RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

This EA analyzes three alternatives: alternative A, the no-action alternative, would not restore fishers in Olympic National Park. Fishers would not naturally repopulate the park or the Olympic Peninsula, as no fisher populations occur near the peninsula. Alternative B proposes that fishers would be captured from a source population that is most closely related to that which historically occurred in the state (preferably from British Columbia) and would be reintroduced into Olympic National Park in three reintroduction areas: the Elwha-Sol Duc, the Hoh-Bogachiel, and the Queets-Quinault areas. A founder population of at least 100 fishers would be released over a three-year period. Alternative C would use captive breeding to produce fishers for the reintroduction. After being successfully bred in captivity, fishers would be released as described under alternative B.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

The preferred alternative, alternative B – Reintroduce Fishers into Olympic National Park Using Translocation, is the selected alternative. The FONSI does not incorporate any changes based on public or agency comments.

The following elements are common to all action alternatives.

- The best available science will be used to determine appropriate management actions.
- The management plan will be adaptive, allowing for incorporation of new information over time to affect management actions.
- A monitoring plan will be developed by WDFW and the Park to monitor the status of the reintroduction efforts. Data gathered as a result of such monitoring will be used to adaptively manage ensuing reintroduction efforts.
- If additional funding is available, education and interpretive measures could be implemented and may include brochures, publications, and information on the Park website about fisher biology, ecology, and the restoration program.
- Communication with Park neighbors will inform them about the status of reintroduction efforts, report on the success of the plan, and provide a forum to receive input from our neighbors.
- Private landowners will be asked to work voluntarily with cooperating agencies (NPS, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the WDFW) during the fisher reintroduction to protect known den sites. The approved multispecies habitat conservation plan for the Olympic Experimental State Forest Planning Unit and other state lands includes conservation measures to protect the federally listed spotted owl and marbled murrelet; these measures will also provide protection of suitable habitat for fishers.
- Such protection could include private landowners voluntarily establishing a 0.5-mile buffer from known active fisher dens during the denning season (generally from March 1 until June 31); protections will not be needed outside this period (that is, from July 1 to February 29). Activities that could be postponed around known, active den sites include timber harvest activities (e.g., felling, road building), silvicultural treatments, and other potentially disturbing activities. The use of signs and gates could be used to prevent disturbance in the vicinity of a known den site.
- The Olympic National Forest (ONF) will approve their own conservation measures to take place on their lands. Conservation measures will consist of seasonal restrictions applied around known, active fisher denning sites between mid-March and late May for

motorized, mechanized activities. Protection will include a 0.25 mile buffer from disturbance for those activities that are long in duration, such as timber harvest and associated activities (e.g., felling, yarding, and road building), as well as road construction. Seasonal restrictions will not be applied for hauling or for general road traffic. Adjustments for the buffer will be based on local conditions such as topography.

- The NPS and the WDFW will seek opportunities to support citizen science. A citizen science program would utilize a group of volunteers to focus on fisher monitoring efforts (for example, volunteers could deploy camera traps). As the reintroduction program developed, opportunities could be expanded to include working with the NPS and WDFW outreach and education coordinators.

Under alternative B, fishers will be captured from a source population that is most closely related to that which historically occurred in the state (preferably from British Columbia) and will be reintroduced into Olympic National Park. WDFW will work with British Columbia or Alberta provincial staff to determine how and where fisher trapping for translocation will occur. Assistance will be necessary from the provincial wildlife veterinarian to coordinate the inspection and approval of captured fishers for translocation, which might include the assistance of local, private veterinarians. Veterinarians will also participate in the preparation of fishers for reintroduction.

Fisher trapping will be done by members of the provincial trappers associations. A trapping coordinator will oversee fisher capture efforts, including managing participating trappers; obtaining captured fishers from trappers, constructing holding units for transporting and housing fishers, assisting in the handling and care of captive fishers, and assisting in the transport of fishers to Washington. Fishers will be captured using box (cage-type) traps and will be expected to spend two to three weeks in captivity in order to conduct evaluations and treatments, and to prepare them for reintroduction.

To monitor fishers after they are released, each individual will be genotyped by taking a tissue sample (i.e., hair sample or ear punch). Each individual will be marked with a passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag, which is a small cylindrical tag that is inserted under the skin behind the ear. The PIT tag allows individuals to be identified by a unique identification code programmed into the tag, which can be read when an electronic receiver is passed over the tag (e.g., when an animal is captured or found dead). Each animal will be photographed to allow identification of individuals by any unique markings. Each fisher will be equipped with a VHF (very high frequency) radio-transmitter collar or abdominal implant. Transmitter life is expected to exceed 15 months for either the collar or implant configurations. Animals will be monitored as long as the transmitter functions, or funding permits, whichever is longer.

A founder population of at least 100 fishers released over a three-year period, with a bias on adults and females, will be used for reintroduction efforts. Fishers will be released in male-female pairs as much as possible. Three initial reintroduction areas were identified based on the availability of suitable habitat and habitat connectivity, and include the Elwha-Sol Duc area, the Hoh-Bogachiel area, and the Queets-Quinault area of Olympic National Park. Fisher releases are likely to occur in each of these three areas. Fishers will likely be released in the late fall / early winter to allow them to acclimatize before winter, to establish home ranges, to locate suitable den sites before the birthing season, and to become aware of potential mates before mating season.

Fishers will be released from roads, or released in remote areas after being transported by pack animals or helicopters. Helicopters will be used only when needed to access priority release sites in backcountry areas infeasible to access on foot or with pack animals or when necessitated by safety considerations. In addition, they will only be used from September 15 through February 28 to avoid impacts to nesting northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets.

Release Scenarios
It is expected that fishers will be released over a three-year period. The timing, number, and locations of releases will vary depending on fisher availability, available funding, and the findings of monitoring efforts of previously released fishers. Likely release scenarios are as follows:

- Year 1 — Release 35 fishers in the fall and winter months, in at least two of three reintroduction areas.
- Year 2 — Adapt the release approach based on monitoring results from year 1 and the availability of fishers from the source population. If no substantial changes were required and fishers were available, (1) release 35 additional fishers in the fall and winter, and (2) release fishers in two or all three reintroduction areas to maximize survival, occupancy, and population expansion. If fisher availability limited the number that could be released, use monitoring results to determine if releases should occur in a reintroduction area that did not receive fishers in year 1, or if releases should occur in the same locations as in year 1. Similarly, releases may be shifted to a new reintroduction area if initial survival is low in a reintroduction area used in year 1, or if it is otherwise deemed unsuitable.
- Year 3 — Follow successful release approaches developed in years 1 and 2. Release 35 additional fishers in the fall and winter in reintroduction areas or alternative locations within the larger Olympic recovery area.

Outreach and Visitor Use
Olympic National Park will conduct outreach activities concerning the recovery effort and possible sources of incidental mortality (e.g., trapping, roadkill, and poaching).

Monitoring
The goal of reintroduction monitoring is to determine the success of the effort. Intensive monitoring will indicate whether the reintroduction was failing before it was too late to make mid-course adjustments to improve the likelihood of success. Monitoring should involve the tracking of as many released individuals as possible and should start at the time of their release. Monitoring will continue until it is clearly demonstrated that a self-sustaining population has been established, or until it is determined that no further monitoring is needed because the reintroduction had failed, or is no longer possible due to a lack of support or funding. Because monitoring efforts will be constrained by available funding, measurement of reintroduction success will be based on the three-year period when fishers will be reintroduced and actively monitored. Over this three-year period the NPS and WDFW will consider reintroduction a success if there is evidence of a reproductive population in one or more of the three reintroduction areas. If additional funding becomes available, monitoring efforts could extend to years 4 and 5, and subsequently to years 6–10.

Adaptive Management
It is envisioned that the adaptive management approach would be used to a limited extent in the following areas.

Source Populations — Both action alternatives would require a fisher source population to be used either for immediate translocation or as breeding stock for a captive breeding program. The location of the source population could vary depending on availability. To best match the fisher population that historically occupied the Olympic Peninsula, preference would be given to obtaining fishers from British Columbia. If this was not possible, efforts would be made to obtain fishers from Alberta. If fisher availability from British Columbia or Alberta was limited, a captive breeding program would be employed, as described under alternative C.

Number of Fishers Released — The number of fishers released each year would depend on the availability from the source population, and the availability of funding to purchase additional fishers. The numbers would vary, ideally totaling 100 or more. However, if fewer fishers could be obtained from the source population, as few as only 60 might be released. If the survival rate for a

particular year was low in one reintroduction area, more fishers might be released there the following year.

Release Locations — Release locations would be adapted based on monitoring results from the first year and the availability of fishers from the source population. Monitoring results would determine if releases should occur in an area that did not receive fishers in year 1, or if releases should occur in the same locations as year 1. Releases could also be shifted to a new area if initial survival was low in an area used in the first year, or if it was otherwise deemed unsuitable. All releases would take place within or adjacent to ONP wilderness areas.

Timing of Release — The preference would be to conduct the initial release in the fall and winter in at least two of the reintroduction areas. However, the availability of fishers from the source population could require shifting the release time so that fishers were released earlier or later than the desired time frame.

Citizen Science — The fisher reintroduction efforts would provide an opportunity for local schools, colleges, and communities to be involved in the effort. Monitoring efforts that the public could be involved with include: collecting scat for food habits analysis, deploying camera traps, and assisting with radio telemetry on the ground.

HOW THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE MEETS THE OBJECTIVES

Engage and inform the public about the restoration effort and the role of the fisher in the ecosystem. Fully meets objective: Education and interpretive measures could include brochures, publications, and information on the Park website about the role of fishers.

Establish a fisher population as genetically similar as possible to the population that originally occupied the Olympic Peninsula (NPS Management Policies 2006, sec. 4.4.1.2). Fully meets objective: The source population will be taken from British Columbia or Alberta, which are closely related to fishers historically occurring in Washington.

Promote the occupation of suitable habitat throughout the park. Fully meets objective: Fisher release areas identified in the alternative were based on occupation of suitable habitat.

Promote the establishment of a reproducing population of fishers. Fully meets objective: Available habitat supports multiple den structures. Known pregnant females will be monitored for reproductive success. Monitoring via hair snares and subsequent genetic analysis will document successful recruitment.

Maintain a fisher population that would persist for an extended time (at least 8 to 10 generations). Fully meets objective: Adjustments made over the first 10 years, based on information gained from monitoring, will modify management activities to maintain a fisher population for at least 8–10 generations.

Maintain a fisher population that could be a possible source for reintroductions to restore fishers in other areas of the state, including other suitable national parks. Fully meets objective: A self-sustaining fisher population in Olympic National Park will provide a possible source for reintroductions in other areas.

Gather information about habitat use, movement, and survival that would be used to guide and define future conservation efforts for fishers. Fully meets objective: Monitoring efforts will include determining survival, home range establishment, and reproductive success.

Contribute to meeting the state recovery plan objectives. Fully meets objective: Restoring a self-sustaining fisher population in Olympic National Park will help the state meet its recovery plan goals.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND FULLY ANALYZED IN THE EA

ALTERNATIVE A – NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under alternative A, no action would be taken to restore fishers into Olympic National Park. Fishers would not naturally repopulate the Park or the Olympic Peninsula, as no fisher populations occur in areas near the peninsula. Given that it is unlikely that fishers exist on the Olympic Peninsula, the park would not continue surveying for fishers. This alternative would not meet any of the stated objectives for the project and therefore was not selected.

ALTERNATIVE C – REINTRODUCE FISHERS INTO OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK USING CAPTIVE BREEDING

Under alternative C, fishers would be reintroduced into Olympic National Park using captive breeding to produce fishers for the reintroduction. This method would also be used in addition to translocations (as described in alternative B) if the translocations were not working or source animals became unavailable. If fisher availability from Canada is limited, alternative C would use the available fishers as breeding stock to produce a sufficiently large source population (e.g., 100 fishers) for reintroduction. NPS *Management Policies 2006* allow restoration efforts to include confining animals in cages for captive breeding. After being successfully bred in captivity, fishers would be released as described under alternative B. Captive breeding provides an opportunity to re-establish populations where direct translocation may risk the persistence of the source population or where no animals are available for translocation. Breeding stock would be obtained from a source population in British Columbia or Alberta. This alternative would apply if a limited number of animals were available for reintroduction, and might reduce the number of fishers needed from a source population. This alternative fully met all but one of the objectives of the project; however, it was not selected because the cost of this alternative was substantially greater than alternative B, alternative B is quicker to implement, and alternative B fully met all the objectives.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

The purpose of this planning effort is to “contribute to the statewide restoration of fishers and to help fulfill NPS policies to restore extirpated native species by establishing a self-sustaining fisher population in Olympic National Park.” Each alternative must resolve need, and meet purpose and objectives to be considered reasonable. Therefore, the interdisciplinary team approached creating a range of alternatives by discussing whether broad options met these requirements. The discussion revealed that each of these options had major logistic or other constraints that would keep them from fully meeting the purpose and objectives or resolving need. These alternatives were therefore dismissed for the reasons described below.

Allow Fishers to Return Naturally

Currently, fishers do not appear to exist anywhere in Washington, and the closest population is in British Columbia. Habitat between British Columbia populations and Washington is fragmented. The Olympic Peninsula is surrounded by salt water on three sides, essentially functioning as an island, minimizing the chances of fishers naturally migrating to habitat that exists there. According to WDFW, there are no populations close enough to Washington to naturally re-establish a population in the state.

Reintroduce Fishers onto Public Lands outside Olympic National Park

The interdisciplinary team discussed options regarding state, federal, or other lands outside the boundaries of Olympic National Park. The presumption is that fishers would quickly find their way

into the park's forest habitat without transporting and releasing fishers within the park boundaries. This was rejected as an option because reintroduction of fishers into the park's wilderness could be accomplished with only negligible impacts to wilderness values (using existing trails with pack animals or on foot, for example), and would be expected to result in fishers occupying the park's interior sooner than if they were released outside the park. An additional reason this alternative was rejected was that habitats outside the park are less suitable for fishers due to such factors as roads and development which has fragmented habitat and which would decrease the potential of a successful reintroduction. A fisher released outside park boundaries that dispersed into a more developed area would have a greater chance of mortality.

Restore Fishers in the Cascades Area

The *Feasibility Assessment for Reintroducing Fishers* identified the Olympic Peninsula as the primary candidate for a restoration effort, but also identified lands in the southwestern and northwestern Cascades as the second and third options, respectively. The interdisciplinary team discussed introducing fishers into the Cascades first as a means of reestablishing fishers in Washington and filling in gaps in the fisher distribution between Oregon and British Columbia, where populations currently exist. However, the state is interested in beginning restoration in the area with the greatest likelihood of success. The Olympic Peninsula was chosen because it ranked highest in this regard due to many factors, including the amount of suitable habitat it offers and the protection that this habitat receives. In addition, modeling showed additional habitat would become available in the area over the next 80 years. The Washington State *Recovery Plan for the Fisher* also identifies the Olympic Peninsula as the best place to conduct the first reintroduction of fishers in Washington (Hayes and Lewis 2006). Finally, restoring native extirpated species is required by NPS *Management Policies 2006* if restoration is feasible. Therefore, returning fishers to Olympic National Park meets the goals and objectives of both the NPS and WDFW.

Restore Fishers as an Experimental Population

The possibility of restoring fishers to Olympic National Park as an experimental population was considered as an alternative under this plan. Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act provides exceptions to the prohibitions on taking endangered species (USFWS 1998a). To lessen concerns against reintroductions because they may also bring restrictions on the use of private or public lands in the area, Congress added the provision for experimental populations under section 10(j). An experimental population is one separated geographically from nonexperimental populations of the same species. An experimental population may be released outside the existing range of the species if this would further the conservation of the species. Species in experimental populations are considered to be threatened, regardless of the species' designation elsewhere in its range, allowing the development of special rules under the Endangered Species Act, section 4 of which addresses how endangered and threatened species are determined. Informal consultation with the USFWS determined that it was not legally possible to release fishers as an experimental population under section 10(j), as the fisher is only a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act and therefore is not eligible under section 10(j).

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In addition to identifying the preferred alternative, the NPS also identified the "environmentally preferable alternative" as defined by the U.S. Council on Environmental Quality. Simply put, "this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources." (U.S. Council on Environmental Quality. NEPA's Forty Most Asked Questions. Question 6.a. http://ceq.eh.doe/gov/nepa/regs/40/40p.3.htm). There is no requirement that the environmentally preferable alternative and the preferred alternative be the same. After completing the environmental impact analysis, the NPS identified alternative B as the environmentally preferred alternative in the plan/EA because continuing current management (alternative A)

would promote the continued absence of the fisher, a native species with an integral role in the ecosystem. Alternatives B and C would both enhance natural processes by restoring fishers to the ecosystem. Because alternative B has less potential for loss of reintroduced individuals than alternative C, alternative B was identified as the environmentally preferred alternative.

WHY THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The following summary reviews impact considerations and highlights key safeguards of implementing the selected alternative. Mitigation measures will be employed to minimize these impacts during and after completion of the proposed project.

Species of Special Concern
The impacts to fishers would be beneficial under the selected action as populations are restored in the park. Restoring fisher populations to Olympic National Park could result in some interactions between fishers and species of special concern. Fishers occupy the same forested habitat as marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls. However, fishers are not expected to adversely affect either species directly through consuming birds, or indirectly through consuming the prey base. The use of helicopters for transplants would occur after breeding seasons for listed birds, and monitoring would use fixed-wing aircraft at altitudes above the disturbance distance for murrelets, owls, and eagles. Therefore, the determination effect under the Endangered Species Act for these species is “may affect, but not likely to adversely affect.” Fishers would not affect northern goshawks, Mazama pocket gophers, or pileated woodpeckers. Cumulative effects would be minor and adverse due to ongoing maintenance and logging activities in and around the project area, and range from minor to moderate beneficial from existing conservation and habitat restoration plans for the park and surrounding lands.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat
Fishers will be restored to an area where they previously existed, and it is expected that the balance between prey and predator species will be reestablished. At first there could be a decline in prey species, however the reintroduction is expected to have a long-term benefit to overall ecosystem function. The use of helicopters during the reintroduction and the use of fixed-wing aircraft for monitoring could disturb some wildlife species but generally this disturbance would result in negligible adverse effects because of the timing of flights and the altitude of the monitoring flights. Cumulative effects would be minor and adverse due to ongoing maintenance and logging activities in and around the project area, and range from negligible to minor and adverse from ongoing maintenance and logging activities to minor beneficial effects from existing conservation and habitat restoration plans for the park and surrounding lands. Overall, the proposed actions would either have no measurable consequence on wildlife, or would be within the natural range of variability, resulting in long-term, negligible to minor adverse impacts. The impacts to the overall ecosystem from the restoration of fisher are expected to be beneficial, long-term, and negligible.

Visitor Use and Experience
Visitors could benefit from the educational and citizen science opportunities in the monitoring of fisher reintroductions. The impact of the fisher restoration project on visitor use and experience would vary depending on the visitor’s expectations, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of wildlife. Some visitors and public could benefit from the knowledge that an extirpated species has been restored to the park. Others may regard the fisher reintroduction as negative. The park’s past, current, and ongoing activities to protect the peninsula’s species and their habitat beneficially affects park visitors. Ongoing management and operational activities can result in negligible adverse effects to park visitor use and experience but this impact is barely detectable to most park visitors. Overall the impacts to recreation resources and visitors’ social values would be beneficial or adverse, short-term, and negligible to minor.

Wilderness Values
Restoring fishers to Olympic National Park would contribute to the wilderness characteristics of the park, particularly the park's primeval character. The use of helicopters for reintroductions only at critical sites removed from roads and fixed-wing aircraft for monitoring could result in short-term adverse impacts to opportunities for solitude, during normal periods of visitor use. The transitory disturbance is outweighed by the reintroduction of the fishers as a prime attribute of the park's wilderness character. Park wilderness management and protection, and other park operations and management activities create both beneficial and adverse effects to wilderness. These impacts are generally barely detectable and affect very few visitors. In the long-term these impacts are beneficial and negligible to minor, as the short-term restrictions provide for the long-term protection of the park's resources and values.

Soundscapes
The primary noise generated from the fisher reintroduction effort that could impact the natural soundscapes is the use of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft for the reintroduction and monitoring efforts. Helicopters could be used for the reintroduction or to recover dead animals. This would temporarily increase human-generated noise levels in the short-term. Helicopter use would be infrequent and would occur after the primary visitor use season. Fixed-wing aircraft would be used to monitor fishers after release for up to 4 years. The flights would occur more than 120 yards above the treeline, and would occur about three times per month. The resulting impacts from the selected alternative would be adverse, short- to long-term, negligible to minor and affect only a very small percentage of visitors for a short period of time. Generally, natural sounds would still be predominant. Noise generated by ongoing and future planned park projects, including flights and maintenance activities, affect the natural soundscapes in both wilderness and non-wilderness areas. Although noise associated with the selected alternative would be negligible to minor, when added to other noise in the park, the overall cumulative impacts would be adverse, long-and short-term, and minor to moderate.

Neighboring Landowners
Approximately 93% of the suitable habitat on the Olympic Peninsula is on public land (including NPS land).

U.S. Forest Service Summary — Of all the neighboring landowners with suitable fisher habitat, the USFS would be the most affected, as it has jurisdiction over 33% of suitable fisher habitat, however these effects would be minimal. If the fisher remained a candidate species, impacts would be adverse and long-term, but negligible because the agency would either not be affected, or the effect would be at or below the lower levels of detection, due to the provisions that have already been taken to protect fishers. If the fisher was state delisted, fisher would still be protected on USFS lands because fisher habitat is protected by provisions in the *Northwest Forest Plan* and fishers are currently included on the Region 6 Sensitive Species List (Piper, pers. comm. July 10, 2007). If the fisher became listed under the Endangered Species Act, the USFS would be required to consult with the USFWS. However, as a federal agency, this task is part of the USFS's regular duties. Therefore, impacts to the USFS are expected be negligible to minor, as the effect may become readily apparent, and may result in a measurable adverse or beneficial effect on the agency.

Washington Department of Natural Resources Summary — The Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has a habitat conservation plan in place that protects multiple species, including fishers. Therefore, the selected alternative would result in little or no impact on the WDNR as it would not be required to implement additional plans or agreements with the USFWS, regardless of the fisher's status as a candidate or listed species. Actions the agency is already undertaking to protect species included in the habitat conservation plan would further protect fishers and their habitat. While a Forest Practice Rule for fishers has not been requested, federal listing of fishers may prompt WDFW to request a rule to increase protection of fishers. Therefore, impacts to the WDNR would be adverse and long-term but negligible to moderate,

because the WDNR would either not be affected, the effect would be at or below the lower levels of detection, or the effect would be detectable and result in a measurable change.

Private Landowners Summary — Private landowners are subject to the provisions of the Endangered Species Act and state regulations regarding harm to listed species. Private landowners could implement a candidate conservation agreement with assurances, a safe harbor agreement, or a habitat conservation plan. Olympic National Park would provide information or technical expertise in initiating and completing these processes. However, the private landowner would incur additional long-term responsibility for implementing habitat enhancement measures or management actions defined under these agreements. Because only 5% of habitat identified as suitable for fishers on the Olympic Peninsula (as determined by Lewis and Hayes 2004) occurs on private land, and these parcels are highly fragmented, the likelihood of fishers inhabiting this land is low. Therefore, few, if any, private landowners would be affected. In addition, if a fisher occupied private land, it would likely inhabit only a small portion of property, given the location of suitable habitat. Should a private landowner choose to implement an agreement with the USFWS, that individual would likely perceive the impacts associated with completing the agreement and implementing long-term habitat enhancement measures or management actions as a moderate impact because they would be readily apparent and would result in a measurable adverse change to the landowner. Impacts would vary depending on the fisher's status as a candidate or a threatened or endangered species, as well as the type of agreement implemented, the amount of habitat that would require specific management, and the extent of those management actions.

Tribal Lands Summary — Tribes would not be required to take action to protect fishers should they remain a federal candidate species or if fishers were delisted in the state of Washington. The fisher's status as a state endangered species would not apply to tribal lands. If the fisher became listed under the Endangered Species Act, the Quinault Nation would most likely be affected, given the location of suitable fisher habitat. Government-to-government consultation would be undertaken to determine the appropriate action to take, which would result in an adverse, negligible impact. Should the tribe develop a conservation plan, it would be given deference, resulting in a long-term, adverse, moderate impact.

The actions taken by federal and state landowners, as described above, would have an additive effect when combined with the protection that would be afforded to fishers within the park. Protection of the fisher as a state-listed species would also offer benefits. These combined actions, particularly those implemented by the USFS and those defined under the WDNR habitat conservation plan, would help offset the need to list the fisher. The resulting beneficial, long-term impact would be moderate if the fisher was removed from the list of candidate species, as the effect would be readily apparent, and would result in a measurable beneficial change to neighboring landowners (particularly private landowners), since the actions described above would not need to be undertaken. Should the fisher become listed under the Endangered Species Act, neighboring landowners would be required to take actions to protect the fisher, in addition to actions already undertaken to protect other listed species. The USFS has already implemented timing restrictions on all ground-disturbing activities for other listed species. Fisher denning is expected to occur from March 1 until June 31, which would fall within the same time frame as spotted owl and marbled murrelet nesting. Protections for den sites would not be needed outside this period. Therefore, it is expected that the USFS would not need to implement additional timing restrictions to protect the fisher.

With the exception of the WDNR, whose habitat conservation plan already includes the fisher, cumulative impacts would be adverse, long-term, and minor to moderate, depending on the landowner. When added to the adverse, long-term, negligible to moderate impacts expected under this alternative, the overall cumulative impact would be primarily beneficial, as removing the need to list the fisher would eliminate adverse impacts to all landowners.

Socioeconomic Conditions
Socioeconomic impacts include the impacts related to potential Endangered Species Act restrictions on timber harvesting and impacts related to fisher predation. In the unlikely event that fishers become federally listed, there may be impacts to socioeconomic conditions in the region. Because the USFS has designated fishers as a sensitive species and restrictions are already in place due to other listed species, there would be negligible adverse socioeconomic effects on the USFS because either no effects would occur or the impacts would be below or at the level of detection.

Only 5% of suitable fisher habitat occurs on private lands, and the likelihood of fishers inhabiting those lands is low; therefore, few, if any private landowners would be affected. Impacts would vary depending on the fisher's status as a candidate or as federally listed (see "Impacts to Neighboring Landowners" above), as well as the private landowner's choice to implement candidate conservation agreements, safe harbor agreements, or habitat conservation plans for their lands. Generally, impacts to private landowners would be adverse, long-term, and minor and the impacts to the socioeconomic conditions would be small but detectable and localized, and only a few private landowners would be affected.

If the fisher was listed under the Endangered Species Act, landowners would be required to comply with the provisions of the act as described under "Impacts to Neighboring Landowners." Timber companies that harvest on WDNR lands would not be affected by the reintroduction, as habitat conservation plans are already in place and any additional restrictions would be related to timing of harvests in a given stand if a fisher is denning. It is very unlikely that a fisher would den in an area not already protected because of the lack of suitable denning habitat. Overall socioeconomic impacts to the counties are expected to be small but detectable and localized, given the small percentage of land that could be affected and the fact that fisher habitation would be unlikely.

Predation on poultry and pets may occur in areas around Olympic National Park, although fishers tend to avoid humans. Fisher densities are expected to be lower than coyote densities in the area, which also prey on poultry and pets. Pet and poultry owners who may be susceptible to the loss of animals from fisher predation already need to protect their animals from cougars, coyotes, raccoons, and other predators. The reintroduction of fishers would therefore not require any change to management and animal husbandry. Individuals with a fisher complaint would be required to contact WDFW to help them resolve the problem and to receive assistance in treating the problem. Larger animals, such as cattle and sheep, would not be prey for fishers. Therefore, local owners of small livestock and small pets may be adversely affected over the long-term, but impacts would be negligible to minor, as they might or might not be detectable and would affect only a small number of neighboring landowners. Combined predation activities by all species would be small and possibly detectable by only a few adjacent landowners, resulting in adverse, long-term, negligible to minor cumulative impacts.

Overall the impacts to the socioeconomic conditions would vary by landowner, but are expected to be adverse, long-term, and range from negligible to minor.

Park Management and Operations
There would be new responsibilities added to park staff, including additional education and interpretive measures, monitoring and research activities, and technical assistance by providing information to neighboring landowners should they decide to pursue candidate conservation agreements or safe harbor agreements. Overall, impacts would be adverse, long-term, and negligible to minor.

BASIS FOR DECISION

As described in the EA, the selected alternative (alternative B) will not have a significant effect on the environment as defined in 40 CFR §1508.27. Significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.
The selected alternative may affect, but is unlikely to adversely affect, marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls since fishers occur in the same habitat as these species and interactions may occur. The USFWS has concurred with the NPS determination of "may affect, not likely to adversely affect." Fishers would not affect state-listed species including northern goshawks, Mazama pocket gophers, and pileated woodpeckers. Therefore, NPS has determined that the selected alternative will have no significant impact on federally threatened and endangered or state-listed species.

Fisher restoration is expected to reestablish a balance between prey and predator species on the Olympic Peninsula resulting in a beneficial, long-term, and negligible impact to the overall ecosystem. The selected alternative would either have no measurable impact on wildlife, or would be within the natural range of variability, resulting in long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts. NPS has determined that the selected alternative will have no significant impact on wildlife or wildlife habitat.

Impacts to wilderness would be beneficial and long-term, as fisher restoration would recover a prime wilderness attribute. However, use of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft for fisher reintroduction and monitoring would create short-term adverse impacts on visitor opportunities for solitude.

Impacts on visitor use and experience from the selected alternative would be short-term, negligible to minor, and vary from beneficial to adverse depending on the visitors' social values. Visitors could experience benefits from the opportunities for education and citizen science that the fisher reintroduction would provide, as described on p. 127 of the EA. NPS has determined that the selected alternative will have no significant impact to visitor experience and recreation resources.

Impacts to soundscapes would be primarily noise from the use of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft for fisher reintroduction and monitoring efforts. Under the selected alternative, these impacts would be adverse, short-to long-term, and negligible to minor, as very few visitors would be affected for only brief periods of time. With these considerations, NPS has determined that the selected alternative will have no significant impact to soundscapes.

Impacts to neighboring landowners from the selected alternative, although minimal, would be highest to the U.S. Forest Service as the agency has jurisdiction over the largest amount of suitable fisher habitat. If fishers were delisted by Washington State, impacts to neighboring landowners would be long-term, beneficial, and negligible as fisher habitat would be protected under existing plans (e.g., WDNR's habitat conservation plan and the *Northwest Forest Plan*) or neighboring landowners would not be required to undertake conservation actions to protect fisher. Impacts to neighboring landowners would be adverse and long-term, negligible to moderate if the fisher remained a federal candidate species or became listed under the Endangered Species Act. In the unlikely event the fisher becomes listed in the future, federal and state agencies would be the most affected, and impacts would be negligible to moderate. Because only 5% of habitat identified in the feasibility assessment as suitable for fisher occurs on private land, few private parcels directly border the park, and these privately owned parcels are highly fragmented; the likelihood of fishers inhabiting this land is low. Therefore few, if any, private landowners would be affected by formal listing of the fisher. Impacts to affected private landowners would be adverse,

long-term, and moderate, as affected landowners would incur additional management tasks to protect the fisher on their lands. If the fisher became listed under the Endangered Species Act, the Quinault Indian Nation would most likely be the only tribe affected, given the location of suitable fisher habitat. Impacts to the Quinault Indian Nation would range from negligible to moderate, but only 2% of suitable fisher habitat occurs on all tribal land on the peninsula. NPS has determined that the selected alternative will have no significant impact to neighboring landowners.

Impacts to socioeconomic conditions from timber harvesting would vary by landowner, but are expected to be adverse, long-term, and range from negligible to minor. Because USFS has already designed fishers as a USFWS sensitive species and restrictions on timber harvesting are already implemented for other listed species, impacts from the selected alternative would be negligible and adverse on the USFS. Impacts to private landowners would be adverse, long-term, and minor, but localized as only 5% of suitable fisher habitat occurs on private lands. Local owners of poultry and small pets may incur adverse, long-term, negligible to minor impacts from under the selected alternative from the potential for fisher predation. NPS has determined that the selected alternative will have no significant impact to socioeconomic conditions.

Effects on park management and operations would be adverse, long-term, and negligible to minor from the selected alternative as park staff would be required to perform additional responsibilities including education and interpretation, monitoring and research, and providing information to neighboring landowners. NPS has determined that the selected alternative will have no significant impact to park management and operations.

The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety. The selected alternative would have no effect on public health or safety.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The selected alternative will not impact unique characteristics of the area including historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. Olympic National Park does not contain prime or unique farmlands. No occupancy, modification, or development of floodplains or wetlands is expected under this plan. The only impacts to wetlands would be from potential predation on beavers by fishers, however, fisher predation on beaver, if it occurred, would not affect wetland functions (i.e., wildlife habitat, water retention/purification, etc.). Furthermore, the implementation of a fisher reintroduction plan is not anticipated to impact prehistoric or historic structures or cultural resources. Reintroducing fishers into the Park would enhance its designation as a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site.

The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment is likely to be highly controversial.
NPS addressed potential controversy through the public scoping process for the EA, which is summarized in the Public Involvement section on pages 15-16 of this FONSI. The reintroduction plan is not considered highly controversial. During the EA public review process there were 197 comments, most of which supported reintroduction of fishers. Of the 197 comments, 15 expressed concerns over potential effects; these potentially controversial issues were addressed to a full extent in the EA. Therefore, NPS determined that the plan does not rise to the level of significance because of controversy over its effects on the quality of the human environment.

The degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. No highly uncertain effects or unique or unknown risks were identified during preparation of the EA or the public comment period.

The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. No future actions are dependent on the reintroduction of fishers under this EA. Any other fisher reintroductions in other regions or reintroductions of other species in the Olympic Peninsula would require a separate decision making process which would not be influenced by this fisher reintroduction plan.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Cumulative effects were analyzed in the EA and no significant cumulative impacts were identified that were attributable to the implementation of the reintroduction of fishers. Resources incurring the highest degree of cumulative effect include soundscapes, socioeconomic conditions, and park management and operations. Cumulative impacts to soundscapes from implementation of the selected alternative would be adverse, long- and short-term, and minor to moderate as existing impacts from human-generated noise would combine with sounds related to activities conducted for release and monitoring of fishers, particularly the use of fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. Other park projects such as the installation of a snow telemetry (SNOTEL) site in the upper Elwha watershed, and routine maintenance operations may involve the use of helicopters near or within the ONP wilderness. Helicopter noise from these projects would be direct, short-term, adverse, and minor. The fisher reintroduction and SNOTEL projects would use helicopters only as necessary and during the low visitor use season, and therefore, the cumulative effects to soundscapes from these projects would be direct, adverse, long- and short-term, and minor to moderate; and the effect on visitor experience, if any, would be transitory. The cumulative impacts to socioeconomic conditions would be primarily related to declines in the timber harvesting industry and the ensuing government payments to affected areas, and would be adverse, long-term, and would vary for individual landowners depending on the amount of habitat potentially affected. Some adverse cumulative impacts would occur, but overall cumulative impacts would be primarily beneficial, as combined protective actions by all landowners could preclude the need to federally list the fisher. Reintroduction of fishers would contribute to an adverse, long-term, and moderate cumulative impact on park management and operations since the reintroduction effort would impact the existing operations, management shortfall, and reduced staff.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The selected alternative would have no effect on districts, sites, highways, structure, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Furthermore, the selected alternative would not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Reintroducing fishers into the Park would enhance its designation as a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site. NPS completed an Assessment of Effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and determined that the selected alternative would have no effect on listed sites or sites eligible for listing under NHPA.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat. The selected action is not likely to adversely affect an endangered or threatened species as discussed above in “Species of Special Concern.” The USFWS has concurred with the NPS determination of “may affect, not likely to adversely affect.”

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state or local environmental protection law. The USFWS has concurred with the NPS determination of “may affect, not likely to adversely affect.” The selected alternative would not result in jeopardy to listed species or destruction or adverse modification of designated or proposed critical habitat. Timing of fisher reintroduction activities in fall and winter months would prevent human disturbance of breeding birds and young, and monitoring efforts would not result in take of migratory birds. Neither public scoping nor public review of the EA disclosed any legal issues. Therefore, NPS has determined

that the selected alternative will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

Table 1. Mitigation Matrix

Resource Area	Mitigation	Responsible Party
Sensitive Species	Fishers would not be released during marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl nesting seasons. All fixed-wing radio telemetry flights would be at flight elevations higher than 120 yards above the tree canopy, although most flights would be even higher. All known bald eagle territories would be avoided during telemetry flights.	**NPS Wildlife Biologist, WDFW Project Lead**
Sensitive Species and Visitor Experience	Helicopters would be used only between September 15 and February 28 to avoid potential impacts to nesting northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet and to minimize impacts to visitors and wilderness experience. If needed, helicopters would be used infrequently (only one to three times per year).	**NPS Wildlife Biologist, WDFW Project Lead**
Wilderness	Fisher releases would occur along roads or trails by vehicle, foot, or with the use of pack stock animals. Helicopters (not fixed-wing aircraft) would be used only as a minimum tool for release or carcass retrieval in backcountry areas that could not be accomplished by vehicle, foot, horse, or with pack string. If helicopters are needed, they would be used only one to three times per year.	**NPS Wildlife Biologist, WDFW Project Lead**
Monitoring	Individual fishers would be tracked to rest sites and den sites which would allow the collection of fisher scats and the identification of prey remains to be used in describing food habits. At least two aerial telemetry locations per month for fishers located in remote area and two locations per week for fishers in more accessible areas would be collected and plotted on aerial photos and/or 1:24,000 USGS quad maps to determine spatial and temporal overlap of fisher foraging areas, den sites or resting areas with current and historic spotted owl activity centers. Researchers will use ground searches to locate fisher rest sites throughout the year in more accessible areas. Researchers will search for and collect scats during all ground based telemetry searches. The research studies are expected to provide at least 5 years of data. (Not all research is funded; however, FWS has provided partial funding to conduct monitoring activities.) An annual report summarizing the results of the monitoring and research will be provided to the FWS at the end of each calendar year (December 31).	**NPS Wildlife Biologist, WDFW Project Lead**

NON-IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES

Impairment is "an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. Whether an impact meets this definition depends on the particular resources and values that would be affected; the severity, duration, and timing of the impact; the direct and indirect effects of the impact; and the cumulative effects of the impact in question and other impacts." *(NPS Management Policies 2006, Section 1.4.5)*

According to the *NPS Management Policies 2006*, *Section 1.4.5*, an impact to any park resource or value may, but does not necessarily, constitute impairment. An impact will be more likely to constitute impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is:

- necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park;
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or
- Identified in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents as being of significance.

NPS Management Policies 2006, Section 1.4.5, also provides that an impact "would be less likely to constitute an impairment if it is an unavoidable result of an action necessary to preserve or restore the integrity of park resources or values and it cannot be further mitigated."

Overall, the selected alternative will result in beneficial effects to park resources and the visitor experience by restoring a missing member of the ecosystem and a key wilderness value. Measures to reduce impacts to the soundscape and special status species have been incorporated into alternative B, the selected alternative.

NPS has determined that implementation of the selected alternative will not constitute an impairment to Olympic National Park resources and values and will not violate the NPS Organic Act. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the EA, public comments received, relevant scientific studies, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and professional judgment of the decision-makers guided by the direction in *NPS Management Policies 2006.*

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Internal scoping for the proposal began at Olympic National Park on May 18 and 19, 2005. Staff from NPS, WDFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Olympic National Forest, as well as Native American tribal representatives, took part in an internal scoping meeting. The goals of the meeting were to: determine the purpose, need and objectives of returning fishers to the park ecosystem; identify issues and concerns associated with restoring fishers and their impact on the park's ecosystem, and; identify preliminary alternatives.

The *Olympic National Park Fisher Reintroduction Plan Draft Internal Scoping Report* was released for public review in January 2006, and a 30-day public scoping period was conducted from January 9 to February 10, 2006, to help define the issues and alternatives to be addressed in this environmental assessment. A news release soliciting public input about reintroduction of fishers was published by the park on January 9, 2006. The news release was published in the Peninsula Daily News on January 10 and in the Forks Forum on February 8. Two programs were offered about fishers at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center on January 10 and at the Forks Department of Natural Resources building on February 1, 2006. Participants could ask questions about the proposal and also submit comments. A news release inviting the public to the February 1 program was published on January 18, 2006. Approximately 100 people attended the two

programs. During the public scoping period, the park received 142 comments on the proposed plan.

The EA was available for public review from September 9 to October 10, 2007. The EA was sent to approximately 159 people on the park's mailing list, and 75 more people received notification by letter or email of its availability and how to submit comments. A news release announcing the availability of the EA and providing information on how to comment was published by the park on September 7, 2007. It was also published in the Peninsula Daily News on September 9 and in the Forks Forum on September 12. A public meeting to review the proposal and provide an opportunity for public comment was held in Forks on September 18. Three participants attended the meeting but did not provide comments at that time. More information on the EA and the proposed fisher reintroduction was published in the Peninsula Daily News on September 17, 20, and 28.

A total of 197 comments were received during the public review period of the EA; 193 from individuals or interests groups and organizations, one from a local town government, one from tribal government, and two from local businesses.

Each comment was considered and reviewed by park staff. In general, comments were supportive of the project. Approximately ten commenters were opposed to reintroducing the fisher. Several other commenters expressed concern that reintroducing the fisher could have a negative impact on the local economy and/or private landowners; others were concerned that there could be impacts to threatened and endangered species. Several commenters also provided questions and/or concerns on several topics, which were addressed in the EA, but needed clarification or further discussion.

The main questions and concerns that were expressed in the comments are as follows: purpose and need for the project, effects of a restored fisher population on existing predator/prey relationships, obtaining enough genetic variability to support self-sustaining populations, the effects of a restored fisher population on existing threatened and endangered species in the reintroduction area, the use of wild fishers verses fishers bred in captivity for reintroduction, effects of potential fisher predation on domestic animals, and suggestions for specific localities for fisher releases. In addition, there were several comments about the impacts on neighboring landowners, socioeconomic conditions, and regulations and policies if the fisher was later listed as federally endangered.

The commenters did not provide any additional, new, or substantive information that would require revising and reissuing the plan/EA for additional public review or that would change the determination of effects. Slight modifications of the EA related to editorial corrections, clarifications, and detailed responses to the commenters questions and concerns were documented in an errata prepared as a technical supplement to the EA. These modifications will not change the determination of impact significance.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Olympic National Park started informal consultation with the USFWS in May 2005, when agency representatives attended the internal scoping meeting held in the Park. A biological assessment was submitted to the USFWS on July 24, 2007 requesting concurrence on "not likely to affect" determinations for marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls. The letter of concurrence was received by the park on October 16, 2007.

Olympic National Park sent letters to area tribes on April 15, 2005, to invite all of the eight associated tribes on the Olympic Peninsula and the Point No Point Treaty Council to the internal scoping meeting on May 17. Park staff followed up the letter with phone calls to tribal wildlife biologists. A representative of the Point No Point Treaty Council attended the meeting on May 17

and 18. Meeting materials and meeting minutes were mailed to those tribes not able to attend the May meeting on July 12, 2005. An additional letter to all area tribes was sent on December 9, 2005, asking if the tribes would like to hold a separate meeting with the park and WDFW to discuss the proposal. Tribes were invited to participate in the scoping process in January 2006, and were provided an advance copy of the EA on August 31, 2007. None of the tribes responded with comments during the scoping period, and the Lower Elwha Klallam tribe was the only tribe that responded with comments during the review period for the EA. The tribe expressed support for the project.

PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS

Canadian Provincial Requirements. Fishers captured in Alberta or British Columbia must be inspected by veterinarians accredited by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. After having been inspected, fishers deemed suitable for transport and reintroduction in Washington would be individually listed on a health certificate. A possession and export permit would also be required from the provincial wildlife authority in conjunction with regional wildlife authorities. A permit might also be required for transport of blood or other tissues to Washington.

Washington State Requirements. The Washington Department of Agriculture (WDOA) requires that an accredited and licensed veterinarian inspect each animal. The WDOA would grant an importation permit for those individuals free from infectious and communicable diseases, and permanently and individually marked, as certified by the veterinarian. The inspection and certification would be designed to meet the requirements of all state, provincial or federal agencies requiring inspection of captured fishers. Upon completion of the health certificate, a WDOA agent would provide an importation permit number over the phone, which would then be written on the health certificate.

Canadian Federal Requirements. The Canadian government does not require any federal permits for exporting fishers. Canadian Customs agents (or port officers) require prior notification by the trapping coordinator and the WDFW project leader that a shipment of fishers would be leaving Canada. Before departure, a Canadian customs agent may inspect the fishers, their holding units and associated paperwork, and question personnel accompanying the fishers.

U.S. Federal Requirements. The U.S. government does not require disease testing of fishers or health certificates to transfer fishers from Canada to the U.S. U.S. Customs agents would require prior notification that a shipment of fishers is arriving in the U.S. Before entry, agents would likely inspect fishers, their transport tubes and associated paperwork, and question personnel transporting the fishers. The USFWS requires prior notification of the expected port of entry (by land or air), as well a declaration of importation (completed USFWS Form 3-177) for live animals and tissues being transported into the U.S. A USFWS agent would review paperwork and inspect fishers to confirm humane transport. No Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) permits are required for fishers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the conservation planning and environmental impact analysis documented in the EA, with due consideration of the nature of the public comments and consultations with other agencies, and given the capability of the mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or eliminate impacts, the NPS has determined that the selection of alternative B does not constitute a federal action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The selected actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment or the park's cultural resources, or natural resources, and are not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species.

There are no unmitigated adverse impacts on public safety, sites, or districts listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

The selected plan is appropriate use in the park, and there would be no unacceptable impacts.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS will not be prepared and the selected actions may be implemented as soon as practicable.

Recommended:

William G. Laitner
Superintendent, Olympic National Park

10/31/2007
Date

Approved:

Jonathan B. Jarvis
Regional Director, Pacific West Region

11/02/07
Date