



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

January 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: Fisher Augmentation Program

Presented by: Cory Mosby

Position/Title: Natural Resource Program Coordinator

Agenda Item No.: 13

Supervisor Approval: SR

Background:

Fishers are a mid-sized carnivore member of the weasel family that are found in mid-elevation forests of Idaho, primarily north of the Salmon River. They were thought to be extirpated from Idaho and Montana by the early 1900s, prompting reintroductions in the 1960s and 1990s with animals from British Columbia and the U.S. Midwest. Genetic studies later showed that a small native population persisted, carrying a unique lineage not found elsewhere. Today, fisher in Idaho and Montana represent a mix of this native lineage and reintroduced animals. This population of fisher have been petitioned for listing multiple times under the Endangered Species Act, with these attempts found to be “not warranted” for listing.

Range-wide camera surveys in 2018–19 and 2023–24, combined with decades of genetic sampling, show this population consists of two geographically and genetically isolated groups: one in the Cabinet Mountains of the Panhandle and the other in the Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests (NPCNF). The Coeur d’Alene Mountains, lying between these populations, contain extensive modeled fisher habitat with limited documented fisher observations. In response, IDFG and partners are taking proactive steps to strengthen the fisher population by improving its size, resilience, and connectivity.

IDFG is implementing a fisher augmentation project in the Coeur d’Alene Mountains by live-capturing animals from designated areas within the NPCNF and releasing them at multiple sites across the Coeur d’Alene range. Over the next 2-3 years, the Department plans to move up to 15 fishers annually. All translocated fishers will be fitted with radio collars to track survival, monitor den site selection, and evaluate translocation success. If successful, this effort will establish a third population center, provide genetic connectivity, and improve our understanding of fisher ecology in Idaho. This agenda item will provide an update of the augmentation efforts to date.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

The Commission is charged with administering wildlife policy, and through the Department, is responsible for preserving, protecting, perpetuating and managing the state’s wildlife (Idaho Code 36-103). Fisher are classified as a furbearer in Idaho, currently with a closed season. Since initial augmentation efforts of fisher in the 1960’s there have been repeated requests for a limited harvest season, as well as multiple petitions for listing this population of fisher under the Endangered Species Act.



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Public Involvement Process:

N/A.

Justification:

The information presented will inform Commissioners about IDFG's proactive fisher conservation efforts in northern Idaho for incorporation in their decision making and engagement with the public.

Staff Recommendation:

N/A – informational only.

Suggested Motion:

N/A – informational only.