



U.S. Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region



July 2015

Species of Conservation Concern

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Species of Conservation Concern?

A species of conservation concern (SCC) is a plant or animal for which we have concerns about its ability to remain on a landscape for a long time. Each forest plan has its own SCC list, which is approved by the Regional Forester. The Regional Forester has not yet approved these draft proposed lists.

What is the difference between an “SCC” and a Threatened or Endangered species?

An SCC is a Forest Service-specific term that comes from the 2012 Planning Rule and Forest Service Handbook. The regulations help us determine if there is a concern about a particular species' ability to persist within the forest. If there is a concern, we design elements of the forest plan to provide the habitat conditions that will enable the species to persist on the forest. An SCC is not a federally threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. We create an SCC list using the best available science in a proactive step intended to prevent species from becoming federally listed.

Threatened and endangered species are federally designated under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. This Act was created to protect critically imperiled species from extinction. Similarly to how we address SCCs, if species that are listed or candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act are present on the forest, then the forest plan must contain direction designed to prevent the species from further decline and contribute to their recovery. Even if the federally listed species is not currently present on the forest but habitat critical to their recovery has been identified on the forest, our forest plan must contain direction to maintain that habitat.

How do SCCs influence forest plan revisions?

Once we have an SCC list, we determine the habitat needs of each species. We then design forest plans to guide management that sustains habitat to support or restore secure SCC populations to the extent we are capable of doing so. Forest plans help us maintain a forest that provides SCCs with the habitat they need to survive.

For instance, each forest plan will have certain components, including standards or guidelines, to sustain or restore ecosystem diversity and habitats. We consider these elements “coarse” filter plan components. If the coarse filter plan components do not provide the habitat conditions each SCC population requires to persist on the forest, then we include additional species-specific plan components to provide habitat conditions necessary for the species. These second components are “fine” filters.

What does “substantial concern” mean?

Substantial concern means there is credible evidence that there is a concern about a particular species’ ability to persist within the forest. This evidence can include:

- The species has been identified as imperiled as a result of status reviews described in the scientific literature and listed in widely accepted databases such as [NatureServe](#), a non-profit organization that provides proprietary wildlife conservation-related data, tools, and services.
- Significant threats, such as climate change or competition from exotic species, threaten SCC populations or their habitat.
- Field surveys have documented declining SCC populations or habitat in the forest plan area.
- The species is known to have low population numbers or restricted habitat within the forest plan area.

What is the difference between an SCC list and the Regional Forester’s list of sensitive species?

While the two lists are similar, they are different. An SCC list is a new element required by the 2012 Planning Rule. This list has specific requirements and will replace the Regional Forester’s list of sensitive species, which was required by the 1982 Planning Rule. While the goal of both lists is to prevent species from being federally listed as threatened or endangered, the SCC list has more comprehensive and defined criteria for inclusion than the Regional Forester’s list of sensitive species, making it less likely that a species in need of help will be overlooked.

Another difference between the lists is our management approach to using the lists. Under the Regional Forester’s sensitive species list (1982 Rule) we manage forest resources to maintain species viability, which was often too difficult to measure at the forest level to know if we were being successful. Under the SCC list (2012 Rule) we manage forest resources to provide the type of habitat and other conditions that the species need to persist on the forest.

Are the Regional Forester’s sensitive species included on the SCC list? If not, why?

The SCC lists includes most of the Regional Forester’s sensitive species but not all of them. We didn’t include all the species for a variety of reasons, such as a lack of scientific information to

support a substantial concern for the species, or because the latest scientific information such as the NatureServe database indicates that the species is not at risk.

Is the California Spotted Owl an SCC?

Yes. We are including management strategies in the draft forest plans to help sustain this species across these three forests. We are also analyzing interim recommendations for the California Spotted Owl in one of our management alternatives of the draft environmental impact statement that will be released for public comment later this year. This analysis is due in part to the Sierra Nevada Framework Settlement we reached last year.

In addition to our plan revision efforts, we are developing a conservation strategy for the California Spotted Owl. If you are interested in this strategy, stay engaged. We will include the public and our stakeholders in developing that strategy later this year.

Is the Pacific Fisher an SCC?

No, because it is a candidate species under the Endangered Species Act and the 2012 Planning Rule provides that the SCC list should not include candidate species. Like the California Spotted Owl, we are developing a conservation strategy for the Pacific Fisher. The goal of this effort is to help conserve and sustain the fisher population. We are working with other federal and state land managers to synthesize key information on the species, including management effects and policies to build a strategy grounded in the best available science. For more information about this strategy, visit our [website](#).

Why are “potential” terrestrial invertebrates on the SCC lists?

The proposed SCC species have a high threat rank in NatureServe and there is scientific information to indicate substantial concern about the species’ capability to persist over the long term in the plan area. A few terrestrial invertebrates have been labeled “potential terrestrial invertebrate.” The reason these are considered potential SCCs is that although they have a high threat rank in NatureServe, scientific information is lacking to indicate substantial concern about the species’ capability to persist over the long term in the plan area.

We are asking the public for input to support or not support the draft proposed SCC listings. Your feedback is most useful if submitted by August 14, 2015, via electronic mail to: r5planrevision@fs.fed.us Please include “SCC lists” in the subject line.

Are these the final SCC lists?

No. While these are our draft proposed SCC lists for each forest, they are not final. We are continuing our analysis, so these lists may change before we release the draft environmental impact statement and draft forest plans later this year. The lists may also change from the draft forest plans to the final forest plans based on the information we gather now and during upcoming public comment periods.

If you know of a species that we missed in our analysis, or a species that we should not have included in our analysis, let us know. Please provide evidence to support your reasoning and where our process should have or not have included the species. Your feedback is most useful if submitted by August 14, 2015, via electronic mail to: r5planrevision@fs.fed.us Please include “SCC lists” in the subject line.

What will we do with your input on the SCC list?

We will consider all the input we receive. When we review the feedback, we will ask ourselves if the input offers valid scientific information we have yet to consider. If so, we may remove or add species from the list based on the valid scientific information we receive. Such changes will be documented in the SCC list released in either the draft forest plans or the final forest plans.

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