

R2 Sensitive Species (SS)

Recommendations and Evaluations

Common Name: Wolverine

Scientific Name: *Gulo gulo*

Recommendation: R2 Sensitive Species (SS)

Recommendation Rationale:

Wolverine historically ranged across the western boreal forest into the arctic tundra. It also ranged south through the higher coniferous forests of the Rocky Mountains and the Cascades. Range has apparently been reduced (trapping, widespread poisoning, habitat modification since the mid-1800's, including urbanization more recently) in the lower 48, and numbers likely have dropped below sustainable levels in most places. In the Southern Rockies, it is believed the species persists at extremely low numbers, but is not likely sustainable at current levels. Wolverines occupy very large home ranges and, therefore, naturally exist at low densities. Consequently, it is imperative that large blocks of interconnected quality habitat be retained. Further constraining wolverine conservation is a very low reproductive rate. These factors entwine to make all population recruitment critical to the sustainability of wolverine populations. Not only are current populations likely below sustainable levels, but habitat effectiveness in the Region is being eroded. Habitat blocks and interconnectivity are being degraded and even severed by highway expansions and development. Research has begun to demonstrate apparent high sensitivity of wolverines to human disturbance at natal den sites. Backcountry activity in the Region is increasing dramatically in denning habitat during the denning season and may threaten reproductive success. Any such losses may be critical to the maintenance and recovery of the species in R2. FS has considerable management influence on this species.