

Photo: Rod Gilbert



## Mazama Pocket Gopher

April 2014

Center for Natural Lands Management



Mazama pocket gophers are small mammals with long front teeth. They dig and live in tunnels, and carry food in their external cheek pouches (pockets). The Mazama pocket gopher is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

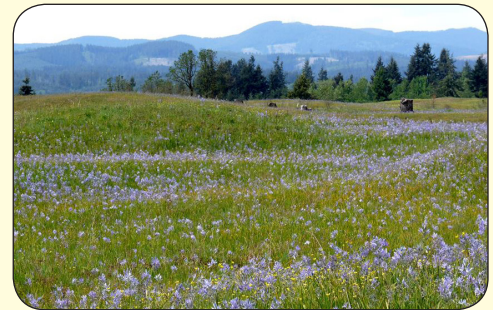
***Mazama pocket gophers are part of Washington's natural heritage. They are found nowhere else. We have a responsibility to prevent their extinction.***

### South Sound prairies

South Puget Sound prairies are one of the rarest ecosystems in the United States. Retreating glaciers formed these open grasslands nearly 15,000 years ago. Today, only 10% of the original prairie remains -- with less than 3% high-quality prairie.

### Where are gophers found?

Mazama pocket gophers are naturally found on South Sound prairies but can live in other ecosystems. They are found on preserves, public lands, and private property.



South Sound prairie in bloom



### Fun facts about Mazama pocket gophers

- Average life: 1-2 years; Length: 5 inches; Weight: ¼ pound
- Gophers eat plants, including roots, tubers, and bulbs.
- Favorite foods: camas, cinquefoil, Oregon sunshine, and early blue violet.
- They are shy, usually stay underground, and do not travel far.
- The only evidence you may see of gophers is their mounds.
- They have lived on South Sound prairies for thousands of years.

### These "ecosystem engineers" benefit prairies

- By digging tunnels, gophers allow air and nutrients to enter the soil.
- Their mounds of soil are good places for plants to grow.
- Their abandoned tunnels can provide homes for other prairie animals.
- They are an important part of the food chain for predators.

### What is CNLM doing to help Mazama pocket gophers?

Working with our partners, we improve prairie habitat and protect gophers on CNLM preserves, Wolf Haven, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, and sometimes on private property. Restoring habitat includes:

- Removing pest plants by hand-pulling, targeted herbicide, and prescribed fires.
- Growing native seeds and plants at seed farms and nurseries, and planting them on the prairies.



Volunteers and staff plant seedlings.

### If you have questions about Mazama pocket gophers on your land,

please contact Thurston County at (360) 754-3355 and [www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning).



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### Center for Natural Lands Management

CNLM is a nonprofit that protects native species and their habitats. Our South Puget Sound program restores prairies and conserves rare species. If you like our prairie conservation work, please consider donating or volunteering. Thank you for your support.