

## STAFF SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 17, 2018

**23. WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE (WRC)****Today's Item**Information Action 

Receive summary from the Sep 20, 2018 WRC meeting and potentially approve WRC recommendations. Receive update on WRC work plan and timeline. Discuss and potentially approve new topics for WRC review.

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions**

- Most recent WRC meeting Sep 20, 2018; WRC, Sacramento
- **Today potentially approve WRC recommendations Oct 17, 2018; Fresno**
- Next WRC meeting Jan 10, 2018; WRC, Riverside

**Background**

FGC directs the work of its committees, including WRC.

**Meeting Summary:** WRC met on Sep 20, 2018; a written summary of the meeting is provided in Exhibit 1.

At its Sep 20 meeting, WRC covered the following topics:

- Annual regulations for:
  - Upland game bird hunting
  - Sport fishing
  - Mammal hunting
  - Waterfowl hunting
  - Central Valley Chinook salmon sport fishing
  - Klamath River Basin salmon sport fishing
- Petitions to change coastal streams low-flow regulations (petition #s 2015-14 and 2015-15)
- Deer and elk tag validation regulations
- Archery equipment and crossbow regulations

**WRC Recommendations:** Based on the meeting discussions, WRC has four recommendations for FGC consideration:

1. Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend regulations for mammal hunting, waterfowl hunting, Central Valley Chinook salmon sport fishing, and Klamath River Basin salmon sport fishing for the 2019-20 seasons.
2. Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend deer and elk tag validation regulations as proposed.
3. Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend archery equipment and crossbow regulations as proposed.
4. Deny petitions #2015-14 and #2015-15 (coastal streams low-flow regulations).

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**New Agenda Topics:** Current topics already referred to WRC are shown in Exhibit 2. No new agenda topics are recommended at this time.

**Significant Public Comments (N/A)**

**Recommendation**

**FGC staff:** Approve WRC recommendations 1-3; consider WRC recommendation 4 on coastal low-flow petitions under Agenda Item 14 – Petitions for regulation change.

**Exhibits**

1. [Sep 20, 2018 WRC meeting summary](#)
2. [WRC work plan, updated Oct 2018](#)

**Motion/Direction**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ that the Commission approves recommendations 1 through 3 from the September 20, 2018 Wildlife Resources Committee meeting as proposed.

**OR**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ that the Commission approves recommendations 1 through 3 from the September 20, 2018 Wildlife Resources Committee meeting as proposed, except \_\_\_\_\_.

**Commissioners**

**Eric Sklar**, President  
Saint Helena

**Anthony C. Williams**, Vice President  
Huntington Beach

**Jacque Hostler-Carmesin**, Member  
McKinleyville

**Russell E. Burns**, Member  
Napa

**Peter S. Silva**, Member  
Jamul

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Edmund G. Brown Jr., Governor

**Valerie Termini**, Executive Director

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## Fish and Game Commission



*Wildlife Heritage and Conservation  
Since 1870*

### **WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Committee Co-Chairs: Commissioner Williams and Commissioner Burns

### **September 20, 2018 Meeting Summary**

Following is a summary of the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) meeting as prepared by staff. An audio recording of the full meeting may be accessed online at [www.fgc.ca.gov/meetings](http://www.fgc.ca.gov/meetings).

#### **Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Commissioner Williams at the Natural Resources Building, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento. Commissioner Williams gave welcoming remarks.

Ari Cornman introduced California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) staff and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) staff, and outlined the meeting procedures and guidelines, noting that the Committee is a non-decision making body that provides recommendations to the Commission. He reminded participants that the meeting was being audio-recorded and that the recording will be posted to the Commission website.

The following individuals were in attendance:

#### **Committee Co-Chairs**

Anthony Williams	Present
Russell Burns	Absent

#### **Commission Staff**

Valerie Termini	Executive Director
Melissa Miller-Henson	Deputy Executive Director
Ari Cornman	Wildlife Advisor
Craig Castleton	Regulatory Analyst
Sergey Kinchak	Staff Services Analyst

#### **Department Staff**

Kevin Shaffer	Chief, Fisheries Branch
Kari Lewis	Chief, Wildlife Branch
Patrick Foy	Captain, Law Enforcement Division
Erin Chappell	Nongame Program Manager, Wildlife Branch

Brad Burkholder	Environmental Program Manager, Wildlife Branch
Eric Larson	Environmental Program Manager, Bay-Delta Region
Karen Mitchell	Senior Environmental Scientist, Fisheries Branch
Scott Gardner	Senior Environmental Scientist, Wildlife Branch

### **1. Approve agenda and order of items**

The Committee approved the agenda and order of items.

### **2. Public comment for items not on the agenda**

A commenter discussed ferrets and asked to see evidence of a “verifiable, self-sustaining, feral ferret colony” and gave several comments in support of allowing ferrets as pets.

A commenter spoke about regulations for individual bag limits versus boat limits when fishing for finfish. He was advised that the request would require a regulation change and that he would need to petition the Commission for the change.

A commenter highlighted the wildlife habitat lost to recent large wildfires and suggested that hunting in fire-damaged areas should be closed for the next season until assessments can be conducted on the impacts to wildlife.

### **3. Department updates**

#### **(A) Wildlife Branch**

Kari Lewis indicated that the elk management plan is nearing completion, and progress is being made on the bighorn sheep and deer management plans. The Department has recently hired a human dimensions expert and an R3 (recruit, retain and reactivate) coordinator.

Kari also discussed DFW’s response to the wildfires. Kevin Shaffer highlighted that the joint Commission/State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection policy was an effective tool, but that implementation may have waned over the years.

#### **(B) Fisheries Branch**

Kevin Shaffer discussed the strategic trout and trout hatchery plan, and that there will be future opportunities for input in early 2019. Karen Mitchell gave a presentation on the sportfish regulation revisions project under development by the Department.

#### **(C) Law Enforcement Division**

Patrick Foy mentioned that new wildlife officers are being added to the field after graduation from the academy and asked the fishing guides for patience as the new officers become more proficient in their jobs. He also highlighted the work of the Department Wildlife Investigations Lab in poaching and wildlife attack verification analyses.

#### *Public Discussion*

A commenter asked how academy classes were filling up. Patrick explained the academy

cycle and a brief overview of the recruiting process. Another commenter brought up the problem of recruitment and retention issues. Another commenter asked about who is selected to be field training officers, and Patrick explained the selection process.

#### **4. Initial recommendations for 2019-20 regulations**

Upland (resident) game birds was the only rulemaking on the calendar for initial vetting. Scott Gardner gave a presentation on upland game bird populations, focusing on sage grouse and pheasants.

##### *Public Discussion*

Commissioner Williams asked about the prospects for next year's sage grouse tags, and Scott talked about the social and biological factors surrounding hunting recommendations from Department. A participant asked about increasing shooting hours for wild turkey; Scott enumerated some of the concerns with the idea, but stated that the Department would continue to speak with stakeholders about expanding turkey hunting opportunities. A commenter suggested that wildlife area managers be given the discretion to determine end times for hunting. Another commenter indicated that Pheasants Forever would be willing to supply birds for introduction on public lands.

#### **5. Committee recommendations for annual regulations**

Ari Cornman provided some background and introduced the topic.

##### **(A) Mammal hunting**

Brad Burkholder gave a presentation and stated that the Department would be revisiting tag quotas and hunt zones for some species, including bighorn sheep and elk. No changes to deer or antelope were anticipated.

##### *Public Discussion*

Several participants expressed the judgment that elk and bighorn sheep populations could support higher quotas in some areas, especially for mature rams, and that some hunt zones could be split into smaller hunt periods or reconfigured. Another commenter pointed out that other states have higher relative sheep quotas. Brad indicated that the Department wants to plan for the long-term health of herds, but is in general agreement with trying to increase hunting opportunities, including sheep fund-raising tags. Other commenters gave specific recommendations and urged completion of the bighorn sheep management plan. A participant asked about elk depredation, and Brad responded that there has been an increase on the north coast and in the La Panza area. A commenter recommended a thorough assessment of wildlife populations in areas burned by wildfires, a hiatus on hunting in those areas, and habitat assessments for various life history factors.

##### **(B) Waterfowl hunting**

Brad enumerated three waterfowl recommendations: (1) a falconry-only season, (2) allowing "small" in addition to "large" Canada geese in the Northeastern Zone and

Klamath Basin Special Management Area (SMA), and (3) adjusting the timing of Imperial County SMA.

*Public Discussion*

A non-governmental organization participant indicated that he believed his members would likely support the proposals.

**(C) Central Valley Chinook salmon sport fishing**

Karen Mitchell talked about the plans for regulatory options in the Central Valley Chinook salmon fishery, including the possibility of a jack fishery.

*Public Discussion*

A participant asked about the range being considered for jacks, that there were claims of overfishing despite hatcheries euthanizing large numbers of fish, asked for more time for stakeholder involvement, and recounted the economic impacts of reduced fishing opportunities. Karen indicated that Department staff had not met yet to discuss the issue, but the range of jacks was likely going to be 0-4. Kevin clarified that overfishing of salmon was not due to recreational anglers. Valerie Termini clarified that the term “overfishing” is a specifically-defined term from the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

**(D) Klamath River Basin salmon sport fishing**

Karen Mitchell introduced the topic.

*Public Discussion*

A commenter thanked the Department for its compliance program, which puts large amounts of water back in the rivers. Another commenter asked for jacks in the Klamath system, said that the one-fish limit was a positive to encourage longer seasons, and asked for an adult “clipped” fish.

*Committee Recommendation*

WRC recommended that the Commission authorize publication of notices of intent to amend mammal hunting, waterfowl hunting, Central Valley Chinook salmon sport fishing, and Klamath River Basin salmon sport fishing regulations for the 2019-20 seasons.

**6. Low-flow regulations on coastal streams**

**(A) FGC Petition #2015-14: Mendocino, Sonoma and Marin counties’ coastal streams**

**(B) FGC Petition #2015-15: Russian River**

Ari Cornman provided background information, and Commissioner Williams expressed particular interest in the Department’s stakeholder engagement efforts. Kevin Shaffer provided an overview of the petitions, stakeholder engagement efforts, and Department

recommendations to deny the petitions based on a number of factors. Ari noted that the Commission staff recommendation was to approve the Department's recommendation.

#### *Public Discussion*

Commissioner Williams thanked the Department for providing the abundance of data and information in support of the recommendation. A participant asked if the State Water Resources Control Board had offered (or been in discussion) to purchase more water gauges. Kevin said that he believed they had, but would check. Eric Larson stressed that management in these rivers is an adaptive process.

#### *Committee Direction*

WRC recommended that the Commission deny petitions #2015-14 and #2015-15.

### **7. Deer and elk tag validation regulations**

Patrick Foy explained that the regulatory language that identifies which firefighters are eligible to validate harvested deer and elk is outdated. He recommended specifying a "full-time firefighter" or something similar.

#### *Public Discussion*

A commenter stated that current regulations specify county firefighters and suggested adding city firefighters as well. Patrick explained concerns that some individuals who sign off on harvest tags may not fully understand what they are signing off on (e.g., a spike buck); current regulations do not address this issue.

#### *Committee Recommendation*

WRC recommended that the Commission authorize publication of a notice of its intent to amend deer and elk tag validation regulations as proposed.

### **8. Archery equipment and crossbow regulations**

Patrick Foy explained that current regulations require a bow that can cast an arrow 130 yards. Other states do not use this measure – most use a 30- to 40-pound draw rate. Forty pounds was indicated as the preferred weight, but there were also concerns about the mobility impaired community that might warrant a lesser draw weight.

#### *Public Discussion*

Commenters stated that the Department was waiting for some more data, but were generally supportive of a 40-pound weight.

#### *Committee Recommendation*

WRC recommended that the Commission authorize publication of a notice of its intent to amend archery equipment and crossbow regulations as proposed.

## 9. Bullfrogs and non-native turtles

Ari Cornman gave a presentation outlining the environmental issues with bullfrogs and non-native turtles, as well as reviewing the stakeholder engagement plan that was presented to the Commission last year. He also presented an updated timeline that would be presented to the Commission for approval in October 2018.

### *Public Discussion*

Commissioner Williams asked about referring the issue to the WRC. A commenter gave a history of the issue before the Commission, stated that it was a mistake to involve diverse stakeholders, and supported a ban on the importation of bullfrogs. A participant requested to represent a constituency on the stakeholder group. Commissioner Williams expressed that diverse perspectives should be sought, and perhaps part of the problem in the past is that all stakeholders had not been represented.

## 10. Delta Fisheries Management Policy

Ari Cornman presented a background and history of the issue. He introduced a draft Delta Fisheries Management Policy that was developed to implement the first recommendation from the Delta Fisheries Forum.

### *Public Discussion*

Commissioner Williams conveyed his desire to have a high-level dialogue about the policy rather than discuss details, and that WRC will have more discussions about it in the future. A commenter said that the policy should address aquatic vegetation. Another commenter expressed concerns that anglers had been noticing dead fish and wildlife in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. Kevin Shaffer affirmed that the Department is aware of the issue and is engaged with other agencies in exploring the problem. Another commenter encouraged interagency collaboration.

One commenter suggested that the policy be grounded in scientific objectivity; Ari agreed but pointed out that the policy needs to encapsulate scientific uncertainties as well. Another suggestion was that the Commission grapple over whether to prioritize listed species over other species. Kevin Shaffer and Valerie Termini gave some context to the policy. Ari raised the prospect of repealing the Commission's striped bass policy along with the adoption of the Delta fisheries management policy.

## 11. Future agenda items

- (A) Review work plan agenda topics and timeline**
- (B) Potential new agenda topics for FGC consideration**

Topics identified for the next WRC meeting included:

- Agency updates
- Upland game bird annual package
- Delta Fisheries Management Policy
- Sport fish regulation revisions

*Public Discussion*

No comments received.

**Adjourn**

The Committee adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

**Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) 2018-19 Work Plan  
Scheduled Topics and Timeline for  
Items Referred to WRC by the California Fish and Game Commission  
Updated for Oct 17, 2018 FGC Meeting**

Topic	Category	2018	2019		
		SEP	JAN	MAY	SEP
		Sacramento	Riverside	Sacramento	Santa Rosa
<b>Annual Regulations</b>					
Upland (Resident) Game Birds	Annual	X	X/R		
Sport Fishing	Annual	X/R			
Mammal Hunting	Annual	X/R			
Waterfowl	Annual	X/R			
Central Valley Salmon Sport Fishing	Annual	X/R			
Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing	Annual	X/R			
<b>Regulations &amp; Legislative Mandates</b>					
Falconry	Referral for Review				
Archery/Crossbow	Referral for Review	X/R			
Deer/Elk Tag Verification	Referral for Review	X/R			
Coastal Streams Low-Flow Regulations	Referral for review	X/R			
Sportfish Regulations Revision	Informational		X		
Bullfrogs and Non-native Turtles	Informational	X			
<b>Special Projects</b>					
<b>Emerging Management Issues</b>					
Lead Ban Implementation	DFW Project				
Wild Pig Management	Referral for Review				
<b>Policies</b>					
Delta Fisheries Forum Recommendations and Delta Fisheries Policy	Referral for Review	X	X	X	
<b>Legislation</b>					

**KEY: X Discussion scheduled X/R Recommendation developed and moved to FGC**