

## STAFF SUMMARY FOR JUNE 21-22, 2017

**18. Announce Annual Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year Award****Today's Item**Information Action 

Announcement regarding the Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year award.

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)****Background**

Yearly, the DFW Law Enforcement Division makes up to four nominations and FGC awards a California district attorney or deputy district attorney with the Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year Award. The award honors those attorneys who, in the previous year, went above and beyond to prosecute wildlife crimes.

Specifically, the award recognizes a district attorney or deputy district attorney who exhibits one or more of the following:

- (1) exceptional skill and an outstanding commitment to protecting California's fish, wildlife and natural resources;
- (2) superior performance in prosecuting wildlife, natural resource and environmental crimes;
- (3) relentless pursuit of justice for the most egregious violators and keen ability to prosecute complex, controversial or landmark cases; or
- (4) exemplary work promoting and maintaining a collaborative working relationship with wildlife officers in pursuit of conserving our natural resources.

This year's award for outstanding service in 2016 was formally presented on Jun 20 at the summer meeting of the California District Attorneys Association, where FGC President Eric Sklar and DFW Chief of Law Enforcement David Bess attended to present the award. The selection process was based upon recommendations from DFW Law Enforcement Division staff that regularly works with the various district attorneys' offices.

This year, FGC honors Deputy District Attorney Sabrina Ashjian from the Fresno County District Attorney's Office.

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

1. [Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year nomination for 2016 service](#)

**Motion/Direction (N/A)**



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**EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor**  
**CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director**



February 3, 2017

To: Prosecutor of the Year Selection Committee  
From: Lieutenant Doug Barnhart and Captain Danny Stevenson  
Subject: Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year

The below statement is from Lieutenant Barnhart.

I would like to take the opportunity to nominate Fresno County Deputy District Attorney (DDA) Sabrina Ashjian as Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year. DDA Ashjian has gone out of her way to be a liaison between the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Fresno County District Attorney's Office this past year. This is the first time in my career that I can recall a single prosecutor in Fresno County, who has taken such an active interest in DFW cases and shown such extreme passion for prosecuting environmental and wildlife resource cases.

Wildlife Officer Arthur Golden began working with DDA Ashjian in late 2015 on a wildlife trafficking case that involved the illegal selling of sport caught fish. This investigation lasted over one year, and DDA Ashjian was right there every step of the way. She was always willing to meet with us on moment's notice to go over any aspect of the case. During the year-long investigation, she provided insight on what would be needed for a successful prosecution, reviewed reports and warrants, and demonstrated her passion for protecting the wildlife resources of this State. Due to changes in the law pertaining to phone warrants, DDA Ashjian took it upon herself to learn the finer points of the new law so as to assist us to the best of her ability. DDA Ashjian has communicated the egregiousness of this case with her supervisors and other prosecutors to ensure that this case is handled appropriately throughout the prosecution process.

DDA Ashjian set up a meeting with the local Wildlife Officers in 2016, so she could meet the officers that work in Fresno County. During this meeting she went over the elements of a successful prosecution, and showed her passion and commitment of protecting the wildlife and natural resources of this State. She has even given out her personal cell phone number and often taken calls after hours to answer questions pertaining to DFW cases.

Prosecutor of the Year, Ashjian  
February 3, 2017  
Page 2

Below is from Captain Danny Stevenson.

I want to echo what Lt Barnhart has said about DDA Sabrina Ashjian. When DDA Ashjian was new to the environmental crimes unit at the Fresno DA's office I had reached out to them in reference to the handling of fish and wildlife cases. DDA Ashjian set up a meeting with her and the other DDA that handles environmental crimes, and their supervisor. Ever since we had this meeting DDA Ashjian has always been available for various consultations and even expressed interest in going on a ride along.

As explained by Lt Barnhart above, DDA Ashjian recently put together a large meeting with all the wildlife officers who work in Fresno County, three DDA's, their supervisor, and a DA investigator supervisor. The meeting was focused around our cases and educating them on wildlife officer duties, training, and our role in the law enforcement community. This meeting was productive and informative to all in attendance.

Since I have been working in the Law Enforcement Division I have never seen any DDA take on such an active role and have the interest in prosecution and drive to take on our cases as DDA Ashjian. She has been available many times in the past for various consultations via her cell phone during off hours. DDA Ashjian is tenacious in her work and is always helpful at every step; in any case we bring to her.

For these reasons, we respectfully nominate Fresno County Deputy District Attorney Sabrina Ashjian for Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lieutenant Doug Barnhart



Captain Danny Stevenson