

# SUPPORTING HEALTHY FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS IN CALIFORNIA AND GETTING PEOPLE OUTDOORS

## *An Expenditure Concept to Invest in Our Natural Heritage for All Californians*

November 2017



## INTRODUCTION

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The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW or department) is the steward of California's most precious natural resources. The job of the department is vast and complicated. This document is an internal summary of an expenditure concept to support the department, its mission, and its diverse constituency with sustainable funding for the future. This document makes a planning assumption of a new funding source that generates \$100 million per year for CDFW. This document describes additive work we should be doing in the future together with work we are already doing.

One of the most visited, but ultimately unresolved issues for CDFW is how to provide the department with sustainable financing. It is not a new problem. Since at least the 1950s, countless reports identify funding as the most important problem to solve. The Legislature has spoken too and amended the California Fish and Game Code declaring this problem. More recently, CDFW has completed two stakeholder engagement processes that analyzed the need for sustainable funding. The first process was the California Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision project that culminated in a nonpartisan, multi-stakeholder report to the Legislature in 2012. The second just concluded. The department was required through the Budget Act of 2017 to reconvene this stakeholder group and provide a report to the Legislature regarding implementation of the 2012 recommendations. In October 2017, the department submitted its progress report to the Legislature with the support of the stakeholder group.

In addition, the department has begun a mission-based budgeting effort that will bring even more transparency to the department's current activities, statutory mandates and funding. This budget effort will be a collaboration with the Department of Finance, legislative staff and stakeholders. Concurrently, the California Law Revision Commission will pause its work to reorganize the Fish and Game Code, and instead, focus on its legislative direction to analyze CDFW mandates and funding. Since 2012, the department has also pursued at least nine separate efforts to align department fees and costs pursuant to SB 1148, including regional conservation investment strategies, mitigation banking, California Endangered Species Act costs for permitting, timber harvest plan review, commercial fishing program costs, scientific collecting permits, a lands pass program and indexing to account for inflation.

We cannot stop here. There is broad consensus that the department needs long-term sustainable funding. California is home to more plants and animals than any other state. With a 1,100-mile coastline, the Pacific Ocean offshore, the Sierra sitting high above the Central Valley, and from the Oregon state line to the Mexico border, California has more biodiversity than most places on the entire planet. However, our state – and the world – is changing rapidly. The climate is changing and affecting this biodiversity, and our population is projected to reach 50 million by 2050. This expenditure concept is responsive to that future.

## WHO GETS WHAT?

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The four elements of this expenditure concept will produce real benefits for California.

1. If you are a Californian, **you will benefit** from sustainable funding for CDFW that allows the department to **expand conservation benefits and efforts**. Rationale:

While other state agencies' missions involve conservation, CDFW is the state's trustee agency specifically charged with protecting and conserving fish and wildlife and the habitats that they depend upon. Funding for conservation efforts is dispersed across CDFW – primarily generated from narrow license fees and federal excise taxes – and not geared to the changing future. A true sustainable funding source would expand conservation benefits and efforts for the future, adapt for climate change, help get more plants and animals recovered and off the endangered species lists, ensure healthy sustainable fisheries in the ocean and seafood on dinner plates, and modernize the department's conservation programs.

2. If you are a Californian that enjoys hunting or fishing in this state, **you will benefit** from sustainable funding for CDFW that allows the department to **improve hunting and fishing opportunities**, increase participation, and reduce the possibility of future license fee increases. Rationale:

While not the nation's most costly licenses, recreational hunters and anglers must buy a license to hunt and fish in California. They also pay a federal excise tax on hunting and fishing gear that the U.S. Department of the Interior re-distributes to the state wildlife agencies. A more diversified funding approach will help avoid future license fee increases and allow a more holistic and equitable approach to funding and fish and wildlife management. It would also increase CDFW's investments in programs that improve hunting and fishing opportunity and increase participation.

3. If you are a Californian, **you will benefit** from sustainable funding for CDFW that allows the department to **get more Californians outdoors** and moves CDFW to engage with and be relevant for diverse and underserved communities through fish, wildlife and habitat conservation and lands management. Rationale:

CDFW manages 1.2 million acres across the state (about 700 properties) for conservation and public enjoyment of California's diverse wildlife and their habitats. Californians are less connected to the outdoors than ever before. The public's expectation of CDFW to oversee and properly manage our natural resources has increased exponentially – yet the funding necessary to conduct these activities has not. The changing demographic landscape of California demands we think differently about how our public might use and enjoy these properties. Although some of our ecological reserves must be set aside exclusively for supporting critically endangered species, many others could support a variety of uses including providing missing outdoor experiences for youth and disadvantaged communities. Getting more Californians outdoors through hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing (which alone is a huge economic engine) and other recreation will drive increased economic activity. A sustainable funding source can move CDFW to better use and manage these public lands as an asset for people and wildlife. Getting more Californians outdoors creates public health, education and environmental stewardship benefits too.

4. If you are a Californian or you are part of the state's important business and economic engine, **you will benefit** from sustainable funding for CDFW that increases the department's stability and services for the **general public and regulated communities**. Rationale:

Californians pride themselves on being the sixth largest economy in the world, an environmental leader, and having a strong sense of place for all the things that make this state so great from Lake Tahoe and our beaches to so much more. CDFW is literally the state's steward of its incredible natural heritage and biodiversity but also has a complex, important role as a regulator of businesses and industries across the state. An efficient and responsive department is an essential ingredient in the state's commitment to the environment and the economy. Public-private partnerships, improved collaborative scientific capacity, communications and outreach, response to human-wildlife conflicts, and permitting partnerships are all key for transparency, public confidence, and durable but fair regulation. A sustainable funding source would increase the department's stability and services for the public and regulated business communities.

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## THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF THE EXPENDITURE CONCEPT

In 2016, the department convened over 50 of its top scientists, land managers, conservation planners, deputy directors and executive team to prepare a snapshot of the highest priority funding needs now and in the future. We started with concepts that in turn became tangible program elements and finally resulted in well-defined programmatic investment proposals. In addition, we evaluated the results of the 2012 Strategic Vision process that served as a beacon for the overall direction as expressed by our stakeholders. Finally, we completed a comprehensive update to the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) – now a blueprint for wildlife, fisheries and marine conservation in California – that included a series of companion plans, each of which represents hundreds of hours with stakeholders representing 10 major sectors. Combined these interactions and assessments formed the basis for this expenditure concept, along with reference to similar efforts in Florida and Oregon and prior efforts in California described in the introduction to this document.

This document makes a planning assumption of a new funding source that generates \$100 million per year for CDFW. For comparison, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) completed a similar effort in 2015-16, and that process proposed an Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund administered by ODFW and funded through an Oregon Income Tax Surcharge or a Wholesale Beverage Surcharge at a minimum of \$86.9 million/biennium in new revenues. A true long-term sustainable funding source for CDFW will result in these benefits to all Californians: (1) expanded conservation efforts; (2) improved hunting and fishing while reducing the risk of future license fee increases; (3) connecting more Californians to the outdoors; and, (4) increasing the department's stability and services for the public and regulated communities. Following are examples within each of the four elements.

### 1. EXPANDED CONSERVATION EFFORTS 30% of Funding

- Provide additional incentives and support for private land owner conservation
- Enhance regional status and trends monitoring of listed species

- Complete candidate species status reviews and develop conservation strategies to support alternatives to species listing
- Improve California Endangered Species Act (CESA) assessment program to gather and analyze species and habitat data statewide to better inform species recovery
- Resume 5-year status reviews for all listed species
- Create a specific recovery program for all listed species and implement
- Fully develop and fund the Safe Harbor Program
- Fund and improve voluntary wetland programs
- Provide policy and fiscal support for Candidate Conservation Agreements
- Integrate species prioritization with new tools like regional conservation and mitigation crediting
- Incorporate the recently updated State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) systematically
- Increase and improve species monitoring, habitat assessment and conservation actions for special status species to verify or document states and support SWAP strategies
- Support environmental review needs relating to growing and diversifying uses of marine habitats and ecosystems
- Evaluate, monitor and review marine protected areas and adaptive management as required by the Marine Life Protection Program
- Improve sustainable, science-based adaptive management of marine fisheries as required by the Marine Life Management Act, and in response to California's changing ocean climate
- Advance innovation and support emerging fisheries
- Upgrade and modernize marine fisheries data management systems and sharing arrangements

- Enhance inland fisheries and hatcheries management
- Increase native and game fisheries monitoring
- Support Central Valley, Bay-Delta fisheries monitoring array
- Support delta smelt and salmon resiliency strategy implementation
- Implement a comprehensive salmon and steelhead monitoring program across the actions in the Klamath, Trinity, Central Valley steelhead and salmon and ocean salmon monitoring efforts; integrate monitoring and outcomes into salmon fishery management
- Build and maintain a program for sustainable and integrated water management, fish and wildlife and ecosystem benefits

## 2. IMPROVED HUNTING AND FISHING AND INCREASED PARTICIPATION

### 20% of Funding

- Design, launch and implement permanent program for hunter and angler recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3)
- Implement modern fish husbandry practices at CDFW hatcheries
- Modernize outdated hatchery fish production
- Enhance stocking programs to provide additional fishing opportunities for urban and underserved communities
- Increase and improve hunting and fishing opportunities at CDFW properties
- Improve hunter access to private lands by expanding the Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) and Private Lands Management programs
- Increase communication with hunters and anglers by providing timely information on fishing and hunting opportunities through a variety of channels

## 3. CONNECTING MORE CALIFORNIANS TO THE OUTDOORS

### 20% of Funding

- Complete comprehensive and inclusive land management plans for all CDFW properties
- Increase and improve wildlife related outdoor recreation and other recreational opportunities at key areas
- Encourage increased public use by featuring department lands as public lands for a variety of wildlife-compatible recreational uses
- Develop and implement strategies to diversify users of department lands and cultivate new partners
- Develop new conservation education programs with an emphasis on urban areas and underserved communities and in partnership with NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and others
- Expand outdoor education programs in a variety of settings including classrooms, clinics and interpretive programs related to CDFW lands and in partnership with NGOs and others
- Use improved collaborative approach with partners as a roadmap for deferred maintenance expenditures and overall lands management (see linkage to Senate Bill 5 and Proposition 64)
- Increase communication with outdoor enthusiasts by providing timely information on outdoor recreation opportunities through a variety of channels

## 4. INCREASED STABILITY AND SERVICES

### 30% Percent of Funding

- Take care of wildlife officers, law enforcement and wildlife crimes response
- Develop and implement modern law enforcement dispatch system
- Expand wildlife trafficking enforcement

- Enhance forensics/genetics capabilities
- Conduct additional warden academy per year
- Develop policy and implement horse patrol for wilderness backcountry coverage
- Develop policy and implement drone and other technology innovations
- Develop policy and implement body cameras for wardens
- Because of climate adaptation, modernize CDFW fish health lab facility
- Because of increase in human-wildlife interactions, modernize Wildlife Investigations Lab facility
- Expand capacity to manage and partner with communities regarding human-wildlife interaction related to mountain lions and wolves
- Create a CDFW central call center
- Create a Tribal Engagement Program
- Increase regional public information officers
- Modernize and implement system and programs for CDFW response to human-wildlife conflicts
- Implement a robust Wildlife Watch Program
- Develop and implement transparency and accountability tools for web access
- Implement comprehensive education and training program with key regulatory sectors
- Implement protocol and policy clearinghouse effort to develop simple, clear and consistent governance and permitting practices and processes
- Create a formal partnership office within department to foster and advance collaboration, for example to advance collaborative science relationships with public and private partners
- Fully fund the department's Science Institute
- Increase capacity support for California Fish and Game Commission