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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

January 11, 2018 Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of the meeting as prepared by staff.

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 10:05 a.m. by Commissioner Williams at the Justice A. Rattigan State Building, Conference Room 410, 50 D Street, Santa Rosa. Commissioner Williams gave welcoming remarks.

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

Committee Co-Chairs

Anthony Williams	Present
Russell Burns	Present

Commission Staff

Valerie Termini	Executive Director
Erin Chappell	Wildlife Advisor
Rick Pimentel	Analyst

DFW Staff

Stafford Lehr	Deputy Director, Wildlife and Fisheries Division
Kevin Shaffer	Chief, Fisheries Branch
Kari Lewis	Chief, Wildlife Branch
Patrick Foy	Captain, Law Enforcement Division
Brad Burkholder	Acting Environmental Program Manager, Wildlife Branch
Karen Mitchell	Senior Environmental Scientist, Fisheries Branch
Dr. Katherine Miller	Environmental Scientist, Wildlife Branch

1. Approve agenda and order of items

The Committee co-chairs approved the agenda and order of items.

2. Public forum for items not on the agenda

Steve Kennedy (Director, Cannonball Express): Provided DVD copies of the docudrama, *Cannonball Express*, and discussed draft revisions to Fish and Game Code Section 13103 related to expanding funding for public education about wildfires that he submitted to the Commission in 2015. FGC staff noted that the California State Legislature is responsible for amending the Fish and Game Code and that the Commission does not have the authority to make changes to it for this purpose.

Brock Dolman (Occidental Arts and Ecology Center): Provided two informational booklets on watersheds and beavers.

3. Department updates

Stafford Lehr discussed elements of the proposed State budget for fiscal year 2018-19, highlighting funding for DFW’s Fish and Game Preservation Fund, salmon and steelhead fisheries, marine resource management, law enforcement, and threatened and endangered species.

(A) Wildlife Branch

Kari Lewis presented an overview of the DFW Wildlife Branch and highlighted recent activities in the Game Program, Nongame Program, Lands Program, and Wildlife Investigations Lab.

(B) Fisheries Branch

Kevin Shaffer discussed 2018 priorities for the DFW Fisheries Branch, including a fishing regulations simplification process, strategic planning efforts for trout, and efforts to rebuild salmonid fisheries impacted by the recent drought.

(C) Law Enforcement Division

Captain Foy highlighted two local 2017 Hunter Education of the Year award recipients and a couple of recent enforcement cases related to wildlife trafficking and poaching.

Public Discussion

A stakeholder asked when enough is enough when it comes to regulations.

4. Identify and discuss initial recommendations for 2019-20 sport fishing regulations

Erin Chappell provided background information and introduced Karen Mitchell. Karen discussed three proposed changes being considered for this rulemaking: (1) increase the bag limit for black bass in Lake Perris from two fish to five fish, consistent with the statewide bag limit now that dam work is complete; (2) allow for the use of native fish species for vector

control without a DFW permit; and (3) changes to the report cards originally proposed for the 2018-2019 season but delayed to allow for vetting with marine stakeholders.

Public Discussion

A stakeholder asked what kind of native fish species would be used for vector control. Karen replied cyprinids. Another stakeholder asked about the possibility of closing fishing on coastal streams until December 1 to protect salmonids. Karen noted that coastal streams regulations would be discussed under agenda item 6.

5. Discuss and approve recommendations for 2018-19 upland game bird regulations

Erin Chappell provided background information and introduced Dr. Katherine Miller. Katherine presented two proposed changes being considered for this rulemaking: (1) annual adjustments to the sage grouse quotas; and (2) establishing a sage grouse drawing fee and preference points system consistent with the change requested in Petition #2016-010. Due to timing concerns, DFW and FGC staff recommend separating the proposals into two separate rulemaking packages with a request to authorize publication of notice for the annual quota adjustments at the February 2018 Commission meeting and request authorization to go to notice for the drawing fee and preference points package later in 2018.

Public Discussion

No comments received.

Committee Recommendation

WRC recommends that the Commission authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend upland game bird regulations for sage grouse quotas for the 2018-2019 season and approve preparation of the proposed changes to the sage grouse draw as a separate rulemaking for consideration later in 2018.

6. Discuss potential changes to coastal streams low-flow regulations

- (A) FGC Petition #2015-14: Mendocino, Sonoma and Marin counties' coastal streams**
- (B) FGC Petition #2015-15: Russian River**

Erin Chappell provided background information and invited the petitioners to provide overviews of their petitions. An inclusive group discussion followed the petition overviews.

Public Discussion

The discussion covered four primary topics:

- Fishing methods - some stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential impacts to salmonids from the use of bait and fishing from drift boats, and supported changes to the regulations to only allow the use of artificial lures with barbless hook and prohibit fishing from drift boats.

- Impacts to angling opportunity under current low flow restrictions - a number of stakeholders noted that the current low flow restrictions limited angling opportunities in the lower portions of the streams or on the main stem of the Russian River. Some expressed concerns about the data used to establish the low flow triggers and the appropriateness of the gauging station being used for the triggers. Some stakeholders supported closing the upper tributaries to angling under low flow conditions but allowing angling in the lower, tidally influenced portions.
- Impacts to salmonids under low flow conditions - several stakeholders expressed concerns about impacts to salmonids during low flow periods and the need to limit angling pressure to protect the fish. A California Sea Grant representative provided monitoring data on Coho migration patterns in the Russian River, noting delays in accessing the spawning grounds, increased stress on fish confined to the main stem, higher occurrences of disease, lower survival, and reduced spawning success during low flow periods.
- Potential impacts to steelhead smolts from angling during summer months - a stakeholder recommended prohibiting fishing in the Gualala River in summer months to protect steelhead smolts.

DFW did not recommend moving forward with the petitions as proposed and noted that some of the requested changes will be evaluated as part of the regulation simplification process discussed under Agenda Item #3.

Committee Direction

WRC directed DFW to meet with stakeholders to discuss potential options to address some of the concerns about the loss of angling opportunities, obtain a better understanding of the data used to establish the low flow triggers, and resume discussion on the two petitions at the September 2018 WRC meeting.

7. Predator Policy Workgroup

- (A) Predator Policy Workgroup member presentations on draft terrestrial predator policy and regulatory proposals**
- (B) Discuss and possible recommendation for terrestrial predator policy and regulatory proposals**

Erin Chappell provided background information on the Predator Policy Workgroup (Workgroup) process and introduced Workgroup members Noelle Cremers and Rebecca Dmytryk, who presented on the draft terrestrial predator policy and regulatory proposals developed by the Workgroup. A robust group discussion ensued following the presentations.

Public Discussion

The discussion primarily focused on three main topics:

- Workgroup structure – one Workgroup member and several reviewers expressed concerns that the Workgroup was unbalanced, which they believe affected the Workgroup’s ability to reach compromise; they suggested creating a new, more balanced group with set deadlines and more frequent meetings. Other Workgroup members and reviewers disagreed that the Workgroup was unbalanced and some did

not support continuing the Workgroup. However, several supported continuing the dialogue generated by this process between stakeholders, but outside of the Commission's processes.

- Tools for addressing human-wildlife conflicts – some stakeholders emphasized the need for more implementation of non-lethal tools, putting more responsibility on property owners to minimize losses, and reducing the take of predators. Other stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential loss of tools for addressing conflicts with predators noting that non-lethal tools, while commonly used, can be expensive and are not necessarily effective in all situations. One stakeholder asked about whether compensation programs for depredation events - are used in California and whether it might be an option. Another stakeholder noted that compensation programs are very expensive and have not worked very well.
- Process for advancing regulatory proposals – while the Workgroup initiated discussions about potential regulatory changes there was insufficient time to complete the process. Stakeholders expressed support for continuing discussions about potential regulatory changes. The WRC co-chairs encouraged the stakeholders to continue working together, outside a formal process, and to bring forward proposals that had broad support for consideration in the future.

Committee Recommendation

WRC recommended that the Commission discuss and consider the draft terrestrial predator policy, as presented, and formally disband the Predator Policy Workgroup.

8. Discuss ideas for outreach and education regarding implementation of the ban on lead ammunition for take of wildlife (Fish and Game Code Section 3004.5; Section 250.1, T14, CCR)

Erin Chappell provided background information and introduced Brad Burkholder. Brad provided an update on the status of DFW's Non-lead Coupon Program. Captain Foy highlighted some of the recent changes in purchasing ammunition associated with the passage of Proposition 63 (2016) and Senate Bill 1235 (Chapter 55, Statutes of 2016). Erin then invited comments from the public on possible ideas for non-lead ammunition outreach and education.

Public Discussion

Stafford Lehr highlighted DFW outreach efforts and plans for future website improvements. He also suggested the Commission consider adding a statement about the transition to non-lead ammunition to its meeting preamble. A stakeholder asked if DFW saw a drop in hunting license sales when lead ammunition was prohibited in the California condor range. Stafford responded that no decrease was detected.

9. Future agenda items

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

Erin Chappell reviewed the WRC work plan, noting the change in timing for discussion and possible recommendation on the coastal streams low-flow regulations in September 2018. No new agenda topics were proposed.

Public Discussion

No comments received.

Adjourn

Commissioner Williams adjourned the meeting at 3:23 p.m.