

1999 ANNUAL REPORT: STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

In 1998 the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) took a significant step toward ensuring the future of our state's fish and wildlife resources by adopting a strategic plan. The Commission, together with our constituents, identified four strategic challenges in the plan, which are: (1) To Develop a Resource Policy Agenda for California's Fish and Wildlife Resources That Assures Resource Sustainability; (2) To Fully Implement the Commission's Roles and Responsibilities; (3) To Improve the Commission's Organizational Effectiveness; and (4) To Improve Commission Outreach.

We envision our strategic plan to be an ever-evolving document and intend to report at least annually on its implementation. Many exciting things have happened during 1999, and we are pleased to provide this first report. Following is a summary of our accomplishments during the past year under each strategic challenge:

Strategic Challenge No. 1

The Commission:

- Worked with the Department of Fish and Game (Department), the commercial sea urchin industry, and academia in initiating a review of the sea urchin resource to develop a management plan and new regulations. The Department and the industry will report to the Commission in the Spring 2000.
- Directed the Department to review the spot prawn commercial fishery and to recommend changes in the regulations, which are now being evaluated and will be considered for adoption in February 2000.
- After receiving concerns from the public and the Department regarding declining rockfish numbers, adopted changes in its sport fish regulations to reduce the daily bag limit from 15 to 10 and to close the fishing for rockfish and lingcod for two months. The Commission will be considering interim regulations for the commercial nearshore fishery in early 2000 to also address this decline.
- Adopted regulations which require the Department to provide "status of resources" reports on an annual basis.
- Adopted a policy regarding Marine Ecological Reserves. This policy would establish a process for identifying ecosystems to be set aside. The Department is now developing implementation regulations which the Commission will consider in early 2000.

Strategic Challenge No. 2

The Commission:

- Adopted regulations to allow for a hearing officer to hear license and permit issues. This will free-up the Commission agenda to allow it to concentrate more on policy issues.
- Initiated a tri-state meeting in March 1999, with Oregon and Washington to discuss exotic species and status of rockfish populations. A second tri-state meeting is scheduled for April 4, 2000, in Portland.
- Held a joint meeting with the Board of Forestry to discuss issues of mutual interest, e.g. hardwoods and salmon and steelhead. Agreed to continue with joint meetings and establish a joint subcommittee to identify issues for regular Board/Commission joint meetings.

- Established a Marine Subcommittee. The group met ten times during 1999 to discuss major issues such as squid resource and regulations, sea urchin resource, rockfish resource, abalone resource, salmon and steelhead resource, Marine Ecological Reserve Policy, and Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries Policy.
- Convened a Subcommittee to evaluate various waterfowl regulations.
- Held several special hearings throughout the state to receive public comments on proposed Klamath River sport fishing regulations and on the draft Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries Policy.

Strategic Challenge No. 3

The Commission:

- Hired a Marine Consultant to assist the Commission in implementing the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) of 1998.
- Evaluated staffing needs and recommended two additional positions to assist in implementing the MLMA; however, the Budget Change Proposal has been denied by the Department of Finance.
- Developed a Commissioner's Manual to be used in the orientation of new Commissioners.

Strategic Challenge No. 4

The Commission:

- Created a web site.
- Placed its agenda, results of each meeting, and all of its Title 14 regulations on the web page.
- Continued to hold its regularly scheduled meetings at various locations throughout the state.

Dated: December 29, 1999

Mike Chrisman, Vice President