

Commissioners
Eric Sklar, President
Saint Helena
Vacant, Vice President
Jacque Hostler-Carmesin, Member
McKinleyville
Russell E. Burns, Member
Napa
Peter S. Silva, Member
Jamul

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Gavin Newsom, Governor

Melissa Miller-Henson
Acting Executive Director
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090
(916) 653-4899
fgc@fgc.ca.gov
www.fgc.ca.gov

Fish and Game Commission



Wildlife Heritage and Conservation
Since 1870

WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Committee Chair: Commissioner Burns

January 10, 2019 Meeting Summary

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

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Commissioner Burns at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Regional Office, Large Conference Room, 3602 Inland Empire Boulevard, Suite C-220, Ontario, California. Commissioner Burns gave welcoming remarks and noted that Commissioner Williams had resigned his appointment and taken a position with the Governor's office as secretary for legislative affairs.

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.

The following individuals were in attendance:

Committee Chair

Russell Burns Present

Commission Staff

Melissa Miller-Henson Acting Executive Director
Ari Cornman Wildlife Advisor
Sergey Kinchak Staff Services Analyst

Department Staff

Kari Lewis Chief, Wildlife Branch
Patrick Foy Captain, Law Enforcement Division
Brad Burkholder Environmental Program Manager, Wildlife Branch
Karen Mitchell Senior Environmental Scientist, Fisheries 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 the ethics of bear hunting. He stated that there was no science behind the draw poundage necessary for a humane kill, and that arrows do not have the shock associated with a bullet impact. He pointed out inconsistencies in the regulations governing firearm possession while hunting versus other outdoor activities.

A commenter representing a new organization, the Prairie Falcon Conservancy, spoke about prairie falcons and threats to its populations, including urbanization, off-road vehicles, and disturbance from hunting. The organization is under the umbrella of the Pacific Coast Conservation Alliance. He asked that a more formal presentation be added to a future meeting agenda.

3. Department updates

(A) *Wildlife Branch*

Kari Lewis provided updates on various plans including elk (which is now available on the Department's website), bighorn sheep, deer, and R3 (hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation). She gave details of the Department's R3 efforts, aerial wildlife surveys that the Department is undertaking, and the upcoming International Sportsman's Expo and Fred Hall shows.

(B) *Fisheries Branch*

There was no update from the Fisheries Branch, with staff focused on Agenda Item 6.

(C) *Law Enforcement Division*

Patrick Foy mentioned the new wardens in the field that are transitioning to independent patrolling. He made some observations about changes in waterfowl hunting patterns; a commenter asked whether the changes had resulted in shifts in the wild meat market, and Patrick stated that he was not aware of any. Patrick shared the story of a game warden and sheriff's deputy that helped evacuate disabled persons from the Klamathon Fire in Siskiyou County. He also shared the story of some individuals fishing without licenses and an ensuing manhunt. Commenters asked about the day-to-day life of a game warden and tips from the public, which Patrick shared.

4. Committee recommendations for 2019-20 regulations

Brad Burkholder gave a presentation on upland (resident) game birds, focusing on the status of sage grouse, declining pheasant populations, and potential future changes in turkey hunting regulations. The Department did not have a proposal for upland (resident) game bird regulatory changes for the 2019-2020 hunting season.

Public Discussion

Commissioner Burns asked about private hunting clubs and their effects on pheasant populations. Brad stated that the Department had not specifically studied the issue. A commenter remarked that farm-raised birds have very low survival rates when compared to wild birds.

Committee Recommendation

WRC recommended that upland (resident) game birds be removed from the regulatory timetable.

5. Initial recommendations for Department lands regulations

Kari Lewis spoke about the Department's intent to propose regulations to designate around nine properties that have been acquired by the Department as wildlife areas and/or ecological reserves. They may also propose removing up to four properties that have already been designated in cases where the Department has lost management authorization. The proposal may also include some targeted, site-specific public use changes that would provide for distinct and important operational needs or address a public safety concern. The Department will bring a more detailed proposal to the May WRC meeting.

Public Discussion

Commissioner Burns asked for clarification regarding the proposal contents and timing. Kari stated that additional land use changes may be considered in future rulemaking proposals but were outside the scope of the current proposal.

A commenter asked that the Department consider lands for falconry-only hunting areas. Kari stated that the issue could be part of a future rulemaking proposal.

Another commenter stated that access to public lands was a critical issue for hunters. He also expressed concerns with development on lands adjacent to Department lands.

Another commenter asked about the designation of the Cañada de San Vicente property; Kari confirmed that the Department is planning to include its designation as part of the current proposal. The commenter also mentioned the need for changes to the crow season at Hollenbeck Canyon, and Kari indicated that the Department would need to take a closer look at the issue.

6. Statewide sport fishing revision and simplification for 2020

Karen Mitchell presented the Department's plan for a statewide sport fishing revision and simplification for trout waters. She explained the goals for the proposal, the concept of a "menu" as a suite of categories for seasons and bag/possession limits to be applied to each trout water body, and the actual categories to be applied to various state waters. She elucidated the methods by which the Department arrived at the "menu" items, based on input

from fisheries biologists in the various Department regions across the state who are familiar with local conditions.

Public Discussion

Commissioner Burns asked about the timing of stakeholder outreach and Commission approval, which Karen clarified that stakeholder outreach has been underway with initial public meetings and a series of additional meetings proposed for April and May of this year before bringing a draft final proposal to the Commission in June. A commenter recommended that the Department present the proposal at upcoming sporting shows. Commenters expressed a desire for receiving some information about the Department's more specific proposals before public discussions commence, to prepare for the meetings. A commenter asked about other fish beyond trout and Karen stated that the Department intends to revise the regulations for anadromous waters next year.

Committee Recommendation

WRC recommended that the Commission endorse the "menu" concept as proposed by the Department.

7. Delta Fisheries Management Policy

Ari Cornman presented a background and history of the draft policy and potential for a repeal of the striped bass policy.

Public Discussion

One commenter thanked the Committee and Commission for taking on a policy focusing on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta). He stressed that the Commission should grapple with management priorities, especially regarding listed fish versus other species. He also supported amending or repealing the striped bass policy, because it appeared to be out of step with the current goals for, and effects of, striped bass.

Another commenter raised concerns with proposals that would target species like striped bass as a solution to addressing more complex problems in the Delta. He pointed to fish management as a potential contributor to lower fish numbers, and that larger plans (such as the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act) which targeted fish such as striped bass would be ineffective and no guarantee of long-term outcomes. He stressed the strong recreation around striped bass and suggested slot limits as a potential model for California angling. He stated that the Commission should seek a balance between listed species and other recreational fish.

A commenter pointed out the Commission's limited jurisdiction with respect to Delta issues. Another commenter spoke about interagency collaboration on Delta issues.

A commenter asked what the goals of the policy were, and Ari read the five goals that had been previously established through the Delta Forum recommendations and approved by the Commission. The commenter suggested the possibility of an overarching fisheries policy

instead of one focusing only on the Delta. Ari pointed out that the Delta has unique biological and political issues that are different than many other fishery systems around the state. The commenter made parallels with plans and initiatives in marine regulation. Ari explained that, due to statutory disparities, the Commission's authorities with respect to inland fisheries were different than those of marine issues.

Commissioner Burns asked Commission staff to take the comments that had been received at both this and the previous meeting, and incorporate them into a new draft of the policy for review at the next meeting. Staff will post the version on the website for public review beforehand.

8. Future agenda items

(A) Topics identified for the next WRC meeting included:

- Agency updates
- Department lands regulations
- Statewide inland sport fishing revision and simplification for 2020
- Bullfrogs and non-native turtles
- Draft Delta Fisheries Management Policy

(B) Potential new agenda topics for FGC consideration

No new topics were recommended.

Public Discussion

No comments received.

Adjourn

The Committee adjourned at 11:27 a.m.