

STAFF SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 9-10, 2019

12. DEPARTMENT INFORMATIONAL ITEMS (WILDLIFE AND INLAND FISHERIES)**Today's Item****Information** ☒**Action** ☐

This is a standing agenda item to receive and discuss informational updates from DFW.

- (A) Director's report
- (B) Law Enforcement Division
- (C) Wildlife and Fisheries Division and Ecosystem Conservation Division

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

Verbal reports on items of interest since the last FGC meeting are expected at the meeting for items (A) through (C). DFW news releases of particular interest are provided as exhibits B1 and C1-C3.

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

- B1. [DFW news release: CDFW and Partners Remove Illegal Cannabis Grows Near Sensitive Wildlife Habitat in Trinity and Shasta Counties, Sep 19, 2019](#)
- C1. [DFW news release: CDFW Steps in to Protect Animals at Wildlife Waystation, Aug 13, 2019](#)
- C2. [DFW news release: CDFW Expands Statewide Sampling for Chronic Wasting Disease \[in deer and elk herds\], Sep 19, 2019](#)
- C3. [DFW news release: Paiute Cutthroat Trout Reintroduced to Native Habitat in High Sierra Wilderness, Sep 23, 2019](#)

Motion/Direction (N/A)



CDFW and Partners Remove Illegal Cannabis Grows Near Sensitive Wildlife Habitat in Trinity and Shasta Counties

September 19, 2019

During the week of August 26, wildlife officers at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) served seven search warrants in Trinity County and conducted one trespass grow investigation in Shasta County. Support for the missions were provided by the National Guard, the State Water Resources Control Board, the Trinity County Sheriff's Department and other local agencies.

A records search confirmed that none of the targeted properties had a state license or county permit to grow commercial cannabis, none possessed a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement and none were adhering to required CAL FIRE protocols.

The operations focused on protecting sensitive wildlife habitat that contribute to the survival of winter-run Chinook salmon, coho salmon, steelhead, cutthroat and rainbow trout, the foothill yellow-legged frog, the western pond turtle, deer and other species that are native to California's rich biodiversity.

"Our cannabis enforcement program in Redding continues to focus on critical habitat found in Trinity County where many important, threatened or endangered species call home," said David Bess, Deputy Director and Chief of the CDFW Law Enforcement Division. "Each of the targeted grows had numerous environmental violations ranging from water diversions to habitat destruction and in some cases extreme pollution near waterways."

In Trinity County, 27 suspects were contacted, 16 Fish and Game Code violations were documented, 33,783 illegal cannabis plants were eradicated and over 3,000 pounds of illegally produced cannabis product was confiscated. In Shasta County, wildlife officers arrested two suspects in a trespass cannabis grow near Ono where 1,163 cannabis plants were eradicated, and six environmental violations were documented. Felony charges are pending with both counties' District Attorney's Offices.

CDFW encourages the public to report illegal cannabis cultivation and environmental crimes such as water pollution, water diversions and poaching to the CalTIP hotline by calling (888) 334-2258 or texting information to "TIP411" (847411).

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Media Contact:

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CDFW Steps in to Protect Animals at Wildlife Waystation

August 13, 2019

On August 11, 2019, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) was notified by the Wildlife Waystation, a wild animal refuge that houses exotic and domestic animals in Sylmar, that their Board of Directors had voted to surrender the facility's CDFW permit voluntarily and to close the facility. CDFW has implemented an incident command structure to handle daily operations and assist with the placement of animals.

As of this morning, CDFW is on site, actively ensuring that daily operations remain smooth at the facility, and is working with animal welfare organizations to place the animals into other facilities. CDFW will maintain oversight of the facility until all animals are placed appropriately.

CDFW's primary concern is for the health and welfare of the animals. CDFW is working collaboratively with Wildlife Waystation staff to ensure the best possible care during this transition.



The Wildlife Waystation was founded in 1976 and has been operating with a current permit issued by CDFW. The aging facility was extensively damaged in the 2017 Creek Fire and again in flooding in early 2019. Wildlife Waystation leadership is unable to repair the facility to current standards.

Media and the public are asked to please refrain from traveling to the property. The property is closed until further notice and access will not be granted. There is very limited road access and no cellular reception.

CDFW is contacting its network of local and national animal welfare organizations both for assistance and expertise in care of the animals as well as assistance in finding permanent placement for the more than 470 animals at the facility.

CDFW Deputy Director Jordan Traverso will be available for media interviews at the command center at the Hanson Dam Ranger Station at 10965 Dronfield Ave., Sylmar, Calif. until 3:30 p.m. She can also be reached at (916) 654-9937.

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CDFW Expands Statewide Sampling for Chronic Wasting Disease

September 19, 2019

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is increasing the scope of its monitoring and testing efforts for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in California's deer and elk herds.

"While California has never had a report of CWD, increased testing is needed to establish with a high degree of certainty that there are no deer with CWD in California," said CDFW Wildlife Veterinarian Brandon Munk. "Keeping this disease out of our state is a top priority, both for wildlife managers and for hunters."

CWD is always fatal to deer and elk, and is an ongoing concern for hunters and managers throughout the country. Once CWD enters a herd, it is nearly impossible to eradicate. Although there are no known cases of CWD being transferred to humans, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends not consuming meat or organs from any animal that tests positive for CWD.

CDFW's Wildlife Investigations Laboratory has set an ambitious goal to test 600 deer statewide during this year's hunting seasons and increasing that number to 2,000 statewide in the upcoming years.

Continued hunter cooperation will be key to achieving the CWD deer testing goals. CDFW will set up check stations during the various deer seasons, and hunters will be asked to bring their deer in for the quick removal of a lymph node for testing. CWD testing of hunter-taken deer is voluntary, and no meat is taken.

Information about specific locations and times of operation of CWD check stations in each of the state's deer zones and control hunt areas will appear on **CDFW's website**. Hunters can also contact **regional CDFW offices** to get check station schedules. Some offices may also offer onsite deer testing.

Some professional meat processors and butchers throughout the state are also partnering with CDFW to take samples from deer at the hunter's request. Hunters who may be unable to visit a check station or CDFW regional office for sampling are encouraged to ask their butcher ahead of time if sampling is available at the time of processing.

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California Department of
Fish and Wildlife

CDFW News -

[MENU](#)



Paiute Cutthroat Trout Reintroduced to Native Habitat in High Sierra Wilderness

September 23, 2019

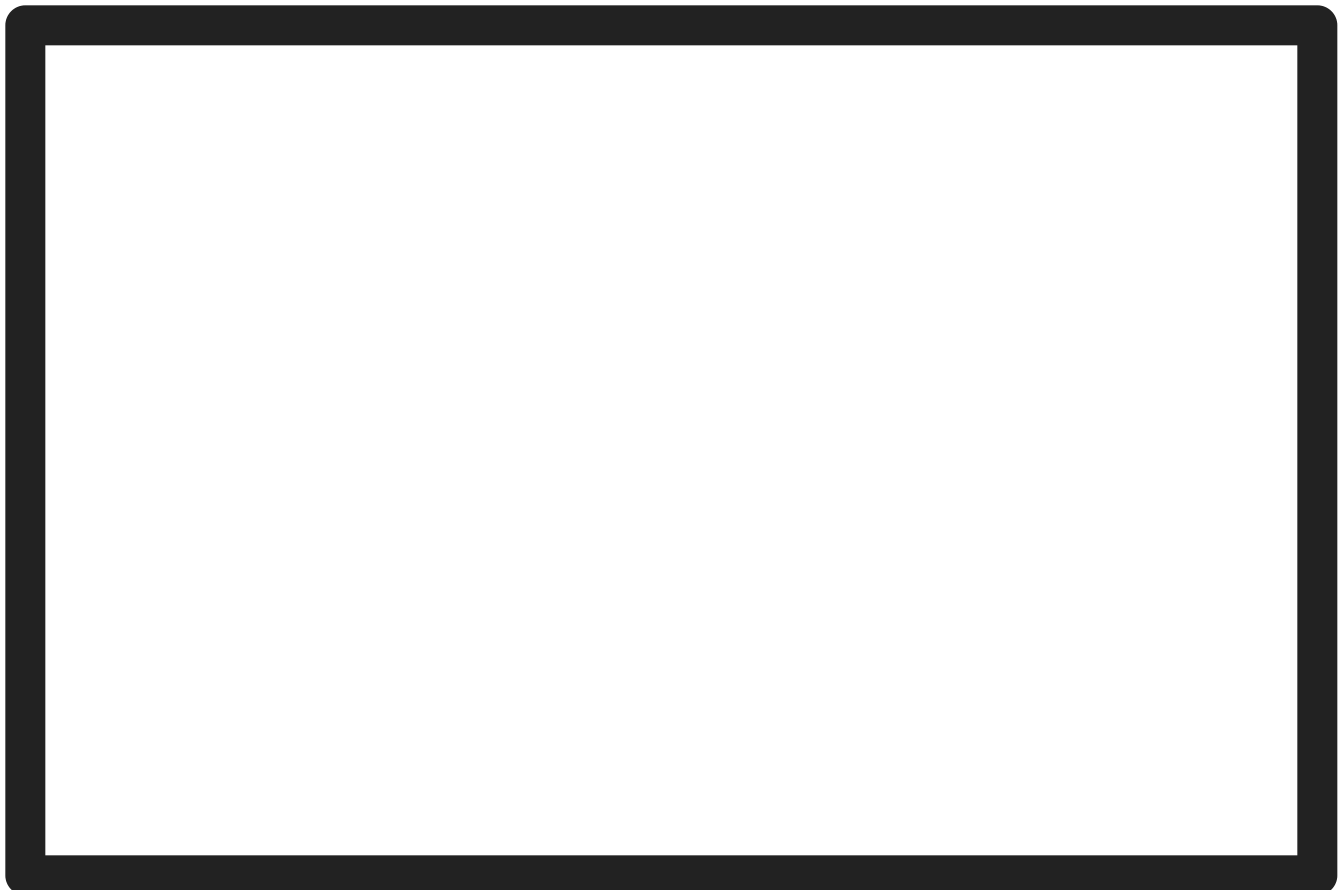
California's native Paiute cutthroat trout, the rarest trout in North America, swims once again in its high Sierra home waters for the first time in more than 100 years.

California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Director Charlton H. Bonham and representatives from the USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Golden Gate Chapter of Trout Unlimited and Little Antelope Pack Station joined biologists to release 30 Paiute cutthroat trout of varying sizes into Silver King Creek in Alpine County, Calif., Sept. 18, 2019.

"You've got to celebrate good times. That's what we're doing here today," said CDFW's Bonham from the banks of Silver King Creek within the remote Carson-Iceberg Wilderness area of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. "If you forget to celebrate, you're overlooking a remarkable success story – bringing these fish back home and celebrating a better California."

Not since the early 1900s have genetically pure Paiute cutthroat trout occupied the 11-mile stretch of Silver King Creek between Llewellyn Falls and Snodgrass Creek that represents almost the entirety of the fish's historic range.

"This is a lifetime achievement for those working to recover the rarest trout in North America," said Lee Ann Carranza, acting field supervisor for the USFWS Reno office. "This remarkable partnership has allowed Paiute cutthroat trout to be returned to their entire native range without threat from non-natives."



The Paiute cutthroat trout was one of the first animals in the nation listed as endangered in 1967 under the federal Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966, now known as the Endangered Species Act. In 1975, the species was downlisted to federally threatened to allow for a special rule that would facilitate management of the species by the State of California.

A small native range, habitat degraded by historic sheep and cattle grazing, and competition from and hybridization with non-native trout introduced into Silver King Creek threatened the species with extinction.

Only a fortuitous turn of events saved the species from disappearing altogether. In the early 1900s, Basque sheepherders moved some of the fish outside of their native range, upstream of Llewellyn Falls. The waterfalls served as a barrier to the non-native trout below and safeguarded a genetically pure population of Paiute cutthroat trout above the falls, providing government agencies and advocates the chance to recover the species in the future.

Efforts to save and restore the species have spanned several decades and involved removing non-native fish and restocking Paiute cutthroat trout from source populations. Recreational fishing was closed within the Silver King Creek drainage in 1934. Later, grazing allotments were administratively closed so habitat could be restored.

At one time, only two small tributaries above Llewellyn Falls held genetically pure Paiute cutthroat trout. CDFW, the Forest Service and USFWS transferred some of these fish to other fishless, protected streams within the Silver King Creek watershed as well as four watersheds outside of the basin to create additional refuge populations to stave off extinction.

The effort to reintroduce Paiute cutthroat trout back into their historic home – the 11-mile main reach of Silver King Creek – began in 1994 when CDFW biologists explored Silver King Canyon and identified a series of waterfalls that served as historic barriers to upstream fish migration, isolating the Paiute cutthroat trout. The barriers could once again insulate Paiute cutthroat trout from encroachment from non-native trout if the non-native trout in Silver King Creek could be removed.

Wildlife officials prevailed over a decade of legal challenges to treat Silver King Creek and its tributaries with rotenone, a natural fish poison, to eliminate non-native trout and prepare Silver King Creek for the eventual return of Paiute cutthroats.

Silver King Creek and its tributaries were chemically treated from 2013 to 2015. State and federal partners monitored the creek for three years following the treatment to make sure all non-native fish were removed. Wildfires, floods and drought over the decades further complicated recovery efforts.

“The commitment of Forest Service, CDFW, USFWS, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Trout Unlimited Golden Gate Chapter and Little Antelope Pack Station to move this project forward in the face of numerous challenges has been incredible,” said Bill Dunkelberger, Humboldt-Toiyabe

National Forest supervisor. “A project of this magnitude that took over several decades could not have been completed without state, federal and other partners working tirelessly together.”

The fish reintroduced into Silver King Creek on the afternoon of Sept. 18 were collected that morning from a source population in Coyote Valley Creek about 2 miles away and transported by mules to the banks of Silver King Creek. The fish were deposited into buckets filled with water from Silver King Creek to acclimate for several minutes before being released among cheers and applause – and a few tears – by biologists and others, some of whom have spent decades working toward the historic homecoming.

Restoring Paiute cutthroat trout to their native Silver King Creek nearly doubles the amount of habitat available to the fish and is considered key to their long-term survival and potential delisting.

Monitoring of the reintroduced fish and additional restocking of Paiute cutthroat trout into Silver King Creek from other refuge populations is planned in future years to aid genetic diversity and introduce different age classes into the creek to help natural reproduction.

Photos and video of the Sept. 18 reintroduction are available here:

<ftp://ftp.wildlife.ca.gov/OCEO/Paiute%20Cutthroat%20Trout/>