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## Fish and Game Commission



*Wildlife Heritage and Conservation*  
*Since 1870*

### WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Committee Co-Chairs: Commissioner Burns and President Sklar

### January 16, 2020 Meeting Summary

Following is a summary of the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) meeting as prepared by staff. An audio recording of the meeting is available upon request.

#### Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Commissioner Burns at the Aquarium of the Pacific, 100 Aquarium Way, Long Beach, CA 90802. Commissioner Burns gave welcoming remarks.

Wildlife Advisor Ari Cornman outlined meeting procedures and guidelines for participating in Committee discussions, noting that the Committee is a non-decision-making body that provides recommendations to the Commission on wildlife and inland fisheries items. He introduced Commission staff and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) staff. The following Committee members, and Commission and Department staff, attended:

#### **Committee Co-Chairs**

|               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| Russell Burns | Present |
| Eric Sklar    | Present |

#### **Commission Staff**

|                       |                                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Melissa Miller-Henson | Executive Director                   |
| Ari Cornman           | Wildlife Advisor                     |
| Craig Castleton       | Associate Government Program Analyst |

#### **Department Staff**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Chris Stoots    | Captain, Law Enforcement Division                             |
| Brad Burkholder | Environmental Program Manager, Wildlife Branch                |
| Karen Mitchell  | Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), Fisheries Branch |
| Russell Black   | Fisheries Supervisor, South Coast Region                      |

#### 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 representative of the Ballona Wetlands Land Trust presented concerns with the recently-released environmental impact report (EIR) for the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project, specifically issues surrounding the parking garage. He indicated that the trust may file a petition on the subject but is seeking an “alternate way” to resolve its concerns and asked the Committee for help. He also stated that the date for EIR certification was unclear due to confusion surrounding which flow rates were to be used.

Several commenters voiced concerns regarding coyote impacts in various areas throughout the Los Angeles area. Concerns included attacks on pets, dead animal remains, trash and food availability, potential threats to children, interactions with the homeless, ineffective control measures, and difficulties in working with local governments. Suggestions included coyote culls, improved data collection and reporting, and collaboration with the Department.

### *Discussion*

Co-chair Sklar emphasized the importance of education and gathering data. David Bess was asked about private citizens’ ability to trap coyotes in their community. He answered that there is multi-layered jurisdiction, and that local municipalities have different ordinances governing trapping and coyote control. Co-chair Sklar added that it depends on who owns the land on which trapping occurs. A stakeholder asked about the mission of the Department, and Co-chair Sklar explained the difference between the Commission and the Department. A stakeholder asked about the Commission’s involvement in local municipality issues, and Co-chair Sklar responded that the Commission cannot direct cities to act regarding issues that are within their jurisdiction. Melissa Miller-Henson remarked that neither the Commission nor the Department have the statutory mandate and funding to address coyote problems. The co-chairs indicated a willingness to continue dialogue on the topic.

### *Committee Recommendation*

WRC recommended that the Commission add a discussion of urban coyote issues to a future Commission agenda.

## **3. Department updates**

### **(A) Fisheries Branch**

No updates were provided.

### **(A) Wildlife Branch**

No updates were provided.

### **(B) Law Enforcement Division**

Chris Stoots discussed the start of a new class of cadets at the Department’s Wildlife Officer Academy. There are currently 465 officers statewide. The Department and its Law Enforcement Division are participating in various sporting shows around the state. He highlighted cases involving trash dumping in waterways and trophy deer poaching.

### *Discussion*

Co-chair Sklar asked about the roadkill bill that recently passed, and David Bess explained that possessing roadkill is still illegal; the Commission has authority to write regulations governing a roadkill permit program. Melissa Miller-Henson added that the legislation indicated that funds should be available before undertaking a rulemaking. Ari Cornman noted that the statute directs the Commission and Department to work with several other agencies to develop the program, so appropriations would have to include them as well. David Bess explained some of the complexities involved in implementing the statute.

#### **4. Bullfrogs and non-native turtles**

Ari Cornman provided an update on the bullfrog and non-native turtle stakeholder engagement process. Staff is in the process of scheduling the next meeting of the agency team. The environmental/animal welfare team has met four times and made substantial progress. The industry team is still being formed.

### *Discussion*

Co-chair Sklar asked about the industry team, and Ari explained that it has been difficult to find participants from the live food market industry; they discussed potential ways to reach out to that community. A representative of the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) urged moving forward with the project. Ari thanked CBD for its participation and stated that ongoing challenges with stakeholder participation needed to be addressed to have meaningful progress.

#### **5. Simplification of statewide inland fishing regulations**

Karen Mitchell presented the simplification of inland fishing regulations rulemaking proposal, including the purposes and goals, public outreach, some examples of how public comment was considered by the Department, and a new proposed timeline. Revisions from the last version include retaining the traditional trout opener and a category for artificial lures. The overall rulemaking revisions will reduce the number of localized seasons from 33 to 2 and size limits from 8 to 2, reduce the number of special regulations by 25 percent, expand angling opportunity in 48% of existing waters with special regulations, and align the regulations with current biological management goals.

### *Discussion*

Co-chair Sklar emphasized the importance of the regulatory proposal. He further asked the Department to consider a regulation that, when there is sufficient stock, anglers who have caught all other trout species be permitted to catch and release a single Paiute cutthroat trout; Co-chair Burns remarked that this may help the Department's hunter and angler recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) program.

#### **6. Future agenda items**

The next WRC meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2020 at the Natural Resources Building in Sacramento. Added by FGC as an additional special meeting, the sole agenda topic will be a

discussion and potential recommendation on the simplification of statewide inland fishing regulations.

### **Adjourn**

The Committee adjourned at 10:42 a.m.