

## STAFF SUMMARY FOR JUNE 24-25, 2020

**25. WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE (WRC)****Today's Item**Information Action 

Discuss updates and recommendations from the May 14, 2020 WRC meeting. Consider referring new topics to address at a future committee meeting.

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions**

- Most recent WRC meeting May 14, 2020; WRC, Webinar/teleconference
- **Today consider recommendations and potential new topics** **Jun 24-25, 2020; Webinar/teleconference**
- Next WRC meeting Sep 17, 2020; WRC, Sacramento

**Background**

WRC works under FGC direction to set and accomplish its work plan (Exhibit 2).

**(A) Meeting Summary**

WRC met on May 14, 2020 and discussed:

- initial vetting of regulation changes for mammal hunting, waterfowl hunting, Central Valley sport fishing, Klamath River Basin sport fishing, and inland sport fishing; and
- an update on the stakeholder engagement process for the bullfrogs and non-native turtles project.

*WRC Recommendations*

As the May 14 topics were at the initial vetting or update stage, no WRC recommendations were advanced for FGC consideration.

A written summary of the meeting is provided in Exhibit 1.

**(B) Work Plan Development**

No new topics have been identified for referral to WRC.

A draft revised timeline for the stakeholder engagement process for bullfrogs and non-native turtles project is included as Exhibit 3 for consideration today by FGC.

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

**FGC staff:** Approve the revised timeline for the American bullfrog and non-native turtle project.

**Exhibits**

1. [Meeting summary for May 14, 2020 WRC meeting](#)

STAFF SUMMARY FOR JUNE 24-25, 2020

2. [WRC work plan](#), updated Jun 15, 2020
3. [Draft Revised Stakeholder Engagement on American Bullfrog and Non-native Turtles Timeline](#), dated June 12, 2020

**Motion/Direction**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ that the Commission adopts the revised timeline for the American bullfrog and non-native turtles project.

**Commissioners**  
**Eric Sklar**, President  
Saint Helena

**Samantha Murray**, Vice President  
Del Mar

**Jacque Hostler-Carmesin**, Member  
McKinleyville

**Russell E. Burns**, Member  
Napa

**Peter S. Silva**, Member  
Jamul

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Gavin Newsom, Governor

## Fish and Game Commission



*Celebrating 150 Years of  
Wildlife Heritage and Conservation!*

**Melissa Miller-Henson**  
**Executive Director**  
P.O. Box 944209  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090  
(916) 653-4899  
[fgc@fgc.ca.gov](mailto:fgc@fgc.ca.gov)  
[www.fgc.ca.gov](http://www.fgc.ca.gov)

### **WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Committee Co-Chairs: Commissioner Burns and President Sklar

### **May 14, 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 9:30 a.m. by Co-Chair Sklar, who 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**

Eric Sklar	Present
Russell Burns	Present

#### **Commission Staff**

Melissa Miller-Henson	Executive Director
Rachel Ballanti	Deputy Executive Director
Ari Cornman	Wildlife Advisor
Cynthia McKeith	Staff Services Analyst

#### **Department Staff**

Stafford Lehr	Deputy Director, Wildlife and Fisheries Branch
David Bess	Chief, Law Enforcement Division
Jennifer Ikemoto	Assistant Chief, Law Enforcement Division
Kevin Shaffer	Acting Branch Chief, Wildlife Branch
Roger Bloom	Acting Branch Chief, Fisheries Branch
Chris Stoots	Captain, Law Enforcement Division
Randy Lovell	Statewide Aquaculture Coordinator

## **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 from Friends of Del Norte thanked the Commission for the transparency and inclusiveness of its mission, while also expressing concerns about the processing and distribution of comments that were submitted previously. Another commenter raised concerns about comment letters submitted to the Commission and asked that the Department provide information to the Commission and public prior to Commission comment deadlines.

## **3. Department updates**

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

Kevin Shaffer spoke about the safety of Department personnel and the public during the COVID-19 pandemic and expressed concerns about getting all the data necessary to inform regulations. He mentioned that the Department's attention is focused on human-wildlife conflict, status reviews, and wildfires. He affirmed that the Department is working diligently on elk wildlife disease issues.

Stafford Lehr stated that the Department is striving to provide information timely to the public, ideally well-ahead of a Commission meeting. He committed to discussing relevant information in the local working group for the elk north coast management unit and encouraged stakeholders to participate in that group, including its efforts to develop a local elk management plan. Concurrently, the Department is working diligently on Treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) issues and will bring information to light as it is formulated. Stafford highlighted the attention on other wildlife diseases, including chronic wasting disease, wild sheep diseases, and a new disease called rabbit hemorrhagic disease.

### **(B) Fisheries Branch**

Roger Bloom highlighted the ongoing sport fish simplification initiative, the recent emergency closures due to COVID-19, work with stakeholders regarding Department-permitted events, and ongoing work regarding species petitioned for listing under the California Endangered Species Act. He touched on the challenges that COVID-19 and remote working have created for Fisheries Branch operations. He raised concerns about lower snowpack levels and potential wildfire issues.

### **(C) Law Enforcement Division**

Chief Bess spoke about large crowds recreating and the public education that wildlife officers have been engaged in regarding physical distancing and other safety measures. Officers have participated in security details with the U.S. Coast Guard, provided security for COVID-19 task centers, and worked with other agencies on state park closures.

### *Discussion*

A representative of the Friends of Del Norte stated that it and the Environmental Protection Information Center would like to be invited to the local elk working group. She advocated for contact tracing of elk with TAHD and focusing resources on the disease. Another

commenter spoke about the sportfish simplification regulations and stated they looked forward to continuing the dialogue with the Department.

Stafford committed to providing information to the Commission and public about TAHD. He also stated that the Department looks to local boards of supervisors for help setting up and facilitating local public meetings, and that the Department would reach out to both groups.

#### **4. Initial vetting of regulations**

##### **(A) Mammal Hunting**

Kevin Shaffer stated that the Department may be looking at potential reductions to northern California deer hunts, adjustments to sheep hunts, and a reduction to pronghorn antelope allowances in Zone 3.

##### *Discussion*

A representative of the Public Interest Coalition spoke against the use of dogs to hunt deer. A stakeholder expressed the hope that some information on TAHD would be presented at the next meeting.

A representative of the California Rifle and Pistol Association and the California Bowmen Hunters/ State Archery Association urged consideration of a one-power scope on archery equipment and an increase of SHARE archery tags.

A representative for the Friends of Del Norte asked for clarification on whether projected hunting decreases included elk, requested more information on herds in general, and advocated for a new environmental document that takes TAHD into account and has a plan for preventing spread of the disease. Kevin clarified that the data analysis in question is for deer only and not elk. Another commenter echoed concerns for the effects of TAHD on elk herds and the lack of information from the Department, encouraged the use of elk-proof fencing where appropriate, and requested that the Department void the 2020 hunting regulations and reconsider them in light of the disease.

Co-Chair Burns asked about previous discussions surrounding scopes on archery equipment and muzzleloaders; Stafford clarified that low-power optics are allowed on muzzleloaders now and that the Department would need to consider the suggestion internally. Co-Chair Burns suggested that crossbows could be included in the conversations.

##### **(B) Waterfowl Hunting**

Kevin stated that the Department is working with the federal government on a framework for waterfowl, given the lack of data this year. The Department may propose slight changes to goose season.

##### *Discussion*

The California Waterfowl Association stated that it would like clarification on whether goose adjustments would require approval from the Pacific Flyway Council and raised concerns regarding light goose overabundance. Stafford answered that the goose date adjustments were within State authority. He mentioned that the white goose depredation order is a federal issue and requires National Environmental Policy Act review, but staff at the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service is stretched thin; therefore, the Department is concentrating on pintail duck issues.

### (C) Klamath River Basin, Central Valley, and Miscellaneous Sport Fishing

Roger Bloom mentioned the upcoming effort for anadromous sport fishing regulation simplification. He also mentioned that the Department would be evaluating the inland fishing boat limit concept. The Department will be monitoring the fishing season on the Klamath Rivr, including the new jack size, for next-year's recommendation.

#### *Discussion*

A representative of the Northern California Guides and Sportsmen's Association (NGASA) indicated a strong desire for the Department to consider boat limits and to have a dialogue as soon as possible.

A representative of California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association recommended exempting carp from the wanton waste rules and allowing bowfishing of gizzard shad.

Roger reiterated that the Department is committed to evaluating the boat limits issue. Ari Cornman provided some history and context to the boat limits issue. The NGASA representative asked whether a new petition was required, and Ari responded that it was unnecessary – the Department and Commission staff are committed to evaluating the issue as they are able, and discussions could occur to potentially chart a way forward.

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

Ari Cornman stated that the agency team made significant progress on its situation analysis. Commission staff was contacted by an importer, who has agreed to be part of the industry group, which will allow that team to start meeting. Once all three stakeholder groups have met, it will allow staff to implement its legislative strategy as well. Commission staff will vet a draft timeline with the full Commission at its June meeting.

#### *Discussion*

A stakeholder asked what can be done if it is known that a person is breeding bullfrogs. Stafford suggested that the stakeholder get in touch with him or contact CalTIP by phone, text or online (details at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/enforcement/caltip>); commercial breeding of bullfrogs requires an aquaculture permit. Stafford spoke about the heightened sense of awareness surrounding wildlife diseases.

Another stakeholder complimented Commission staff on the meeting preparations under the extraordinary circumstances.

## **6. Future agenda items**

The next WRC meeting is scheduled for September 17, 2020 in Sacramento; topics for discussion will include potential recommendations for mammal hunting, waterfowl hunting, Central Valley sport fishing, Klamath River Basin sport fishing and general sport fishing, as well as initial vetting for upland game bird hunting and an update on the bullfrog and non-native turtle project.

#### *Discussion*

A stakeholder praised the technology used for the meeting and encouraged the use of video in the future. The Co-Chairs thanked Commission staff and stakeholders.

## **Adjourn**

The Committee adjourned at 10:56 a.m.

**Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) 2020-1 Work Plan**  
**Scheduled Topics and Timeline for Items Referred to WRC by the California Fish and Game Commission**

*Updated June 15, 2020*

		May 2020 Teleconference	Sep 2020 Sacramento	Jan 2021 TBD
<b>Annual Regulations</b>				
Upland (Resident) Game Birds	Annual		X	X/R
Sport Fishing	Annual			
Mammal Hunting	Annual	X	X/R	
Waterfowl	Annual	X	X/R	
Central Valley Salmon Sport Fishing	Annual	X	X/R	
Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing	Annual	X	X/R	
<b>Regulations &amp; Legislative Mandates</b>				
Falconry	Referral for Review			
Simplification of Statewide Inland Fishing Regulations	Regulatory			
<b>Special Projects</b>				
American Bullfrog and Non-native Turtle Stakeholder Engagement Project	Referral for Review	X	X	X

**KEY: X Discussion scheduled X/R Recommendation developed and moved to FGC**

\* Note: The March meeting is an additional meeting that was added by FGC



# California Fish and Game Commission

## Draft Revised Stakeholder Engagement on American Bullfrogs and Non-native Turtles Timeline

*Revised June 12, 2020*

### **Purpose**

California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) staff recommendation on a revised timeline for stakeholder engagement to identify potential regulatory and statutory changes, funding mechanisms, and strategies for existing wild populations of American bullfrogs and non-native turtles to reduce the impacts on California's native wildlife.

### **Proposed Revised Timeline for Completion**

- ***Jun-Nov 2020***
  - Complete situation analyses with Agency, Industry and Environmental/Animal Welfare groups
  - Provide updates on the process at regular Commission and Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) meetings
  - Outreach meetings with legislative caucuses/committees
- ***Dec 2020***
  - Staff synthesis of three plans
  - Formulate range of options for the Commission
- ***Jan 2021***
  - Presentation to WRC and discussion of options
- ***Feb-Apr 2021***
  - Public workshop
  - Commission and California Department of Fish and Wildlife staff finalize proposal
- ***May 2021***
  - WRC recommendation to Commission
- ***June 2021***
  - Staff presentation and possible action on proposal by Commission