

STAFF SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 12-13, 2022

13B. DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR AND LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION REPORTS**Today's Item****Information** ☒**Action** ☐

DFW will highlight items of note since the last FGC meeting.

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

Verbal reports are expected for the Director's report and Law Enforcement Division reports. DFW news releases of interest are provided as exhibits 1 and 2.

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

1. [DFW news release: San Diego Area Wildlife Officer Is CDFW's 2021 Wildlife Officer of The Year, dated Aug 16, 2022](#)
2. [DFW news release: CDFW Director Statement on FERC Release of EIS On Klamath Dam Removal, dated Aug 26, 2022](#)

Motion (N/A)

San Diego Area Wildlife Officer Is CDFW's 2021 Wildlife Officer Of The Year

August 16, 2022



Warden Austin Smith has been named 2021 Wildlife Officer of the Year, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) announced.

Warden Smith started his wildlife officer career in 2016 and has been an exceptional investigator, dedicated officer and a true asset to CDFW. Smith's investigations have involved many deer, wild turkey and illegal firearms violations. He also took the initiative to learn various aspects of unlawful commercial fishing, becoming highly proficient at Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel investigations. In Smith's first six years with CDFW, he issued a total of 1,345 citations.

In addition to Warden Smith's crime-solving skills, he has also dedicated himself to supporting public safety. In late 2019, Smith participated in a multi-agency Search and Rescue mission at the CDFW-managed Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area in rural San Diego County. A woman who was hiking the area had been reported missing by her husband. Smith used traditional tracking skills by following her footsteps away from her parked vehicle. Tracking is a skill lost to most of society and mastered by even fewer. Smith followed the

tracks for several miles into the wildlife area and located the injured, dehydrated and disoriented woman. Smith transported the woman back to the parking lot where she was met and treated by paramedics.

And despite his short tenure in the Law Enforcement Division, Warden Smith makes it a priority to mentor probationary wildlife officers as a POST-certified Field Training Officer. He is also a designated arrest and control instructor, TASER instructor and evidence custodian.

“Warden Smith is very deserving of this award for his contributions to protecting our precious resources and keeping the citizens of California safe,” said David Bess, CDFW Deputy Director and Chief of the Law Enforcement Division.

CDFW is thankful to Warden Smith as his singularly distinctive accomplishments reflect great credit upon himself, CDFW and the State of California. But the best “thank you” Warden Smith could ever receive was back in 2021 in the parking lot of the Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area. A man approached him in the lot and not immediately recognizing him, described to Smith how he loved wildlife officers. The man said he was extremely grateful to them as one had saved his lost wife’s life at the same wildlife area a few years earlier. That officer was indeed Warden Austin Smith.

CDFW Director Statement On FERC Release Of EIS On Klamath Dam Removal

August 26, 2022

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Director Charlton H. Bonham issued the following statement on the release today by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission([opens in new tab](#)) (FERC) of the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed decommissioning of four dams on the Klamath River:

“We applaud the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission staff for issuing the final EIS ahead of schedule and for validating license surrender and dam removal as the right thing to do. While we continue to review the document, we welcome this critical milestone and look forward to advancing what will be the largest dam removal project in U.S. history and restoration of 400 miles of the Klamath River for the benefit of salmon, Tribes and communities in the basin. The final EIS along with the Department of the Interior’s recent funding for the Klamath River Basin under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and leadership from Oregon and California all point toward now being the time to solve many of the basin’s long-running restoration and water challenges.”