

Staff Summary for April 17-18, 2024

12. Five-Year Private Lands Wildlife Habitat Enhancement and Management Area (PLM) Plans and Licenses (consent)

Today's Item

Information Action

Consider approving five-year PLM plans and 2024-2028 licenses.

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

California Fish and Game Code sections 3400-3408 and Title 14 Section 601 prescribe conditions for a PLM program that provides incentives for landholders to manage their property for the benefit of fish and wildlife in exchange for access to increased recreational opportunities, such as hunting tags or extended seasons ("harvest program"). In return for a harvest program, the landholder must prepare a biologically-sound wildlife management plan and complete specific wildlife habitat improvements on the PLM property.

The Department has reviewed the five-year renewals for nine properties in six counties, consisting of approximately 112,818 acres.

The Department recommends that the Commission approve the five-year wildlife management plan renewals, license renewal applications, and each 2024-2028 harvest program under conditions specified in Exhibit 2. Habitat improvements accomplished under these plans will enhance and maintain wildlife resources on and around the PLM areas. The goals and objectives stated in the management plans are compatible with Department management plans for appropriate species in these areas and the Department finds them compliant with Commission regulations and policies for PLM licenses and plans.

At the June 2024 Commission meeting, the Department will give a presentation on its PLM Program, as requested by the Commission.

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

Commission staff: Approve five-year PLM license renewals for 2024-2028, and proposed seasons, harvests and habitat improvements for 2024-2028 as recommended by the Department for nine properties, under a motion to adopt the consent calendar.

Department: Approve five-year PLM license renewals for nine properties, under the conditions specified in Exhibit 2.

Exhibits

1. [Department memo, received March 29, 2024](#)
2. [PLM Area License 5-Year Renewals, 2024-2028, Proposed Seasons, Harvests, and Habitat Improvements, received March 29, 2024](#)

Staff Summary for April 17-18, 2024

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission adopts the staff recommendations for items 11-15 on the consent calendar.

Memorandum

Date: March 25, 2024

To: Melissa Miller- Henson
Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission

From: Charlton H. Bonham
Director

Subject: **Agenda Item for the April 17-18, 2024 Fish and Game Commission Meeting
Private Lands Wildlife Habitat Enhancement and Management (PLM) Area
Licenses**

California Fish and Game Code Section 3406(c) requires that the activities conducted pursuant to each Private Lands Wildlife Habitat Enhancement and Management Plan (PLM) shall be reviewed annually by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) and by the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) at a public hearing. Licenses for such areas may be granted by the Commission for a period of five (5) years following department review and approval of the management plan (Title 14, California Code of Regulations Section 601(a)).

The Department has reviewed the initial management plan for one new property in one county consisting of approximately 4,988 acres and the 5-year renewals for nine properties in six counties consisting of approximately 112,818 acres. Additionally, the Department has reviewed the annual reports for 52 properties in 14 counties consisting of approximately 550,079 acres.

The Department recommends that the Commission approve the wildlife management plans, applications, and each 2024/25 harvest program under conditions specified in the attached tables. Habitat improvements accomplished under these plans will enhance and maintain wildlife resources on and around the PLM areas. The goals and objectives stated in the management plans are compatible with Department management plans for appropriate species in these areas.

The remaining PLM areas will be submitted to the Commission for approval at the June 19-20, 2024 meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Victoria Barr at (916) 203-0567 or by email at Victoria.barr@wildlife.ca.gov.

Attachment

ec: Chad Dibble, Deputy Director
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission
March 25, 2024
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Scott Gardner, Branch Chief
Wildlife Branch

Mario Klip, Environmental Program Manager
Wildlife Branch

Brett Furnas, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor
Wildlife Branch

Victoria Barr, Environmental Scientist
Wildlife Branch

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
PLM Area License
5-Year Management Plan Renewals, 2024-2028
Proposed Seasons, Harvests, and Habitat Improvements

NORTHERN REGION		
PLM Area	2024 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
<p>Bell Ranch Deer Zone C4 Tehama 15,000 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 15 forked-horn or better buck deer</p> <p>Issue 15 buck deer tags for the period October 26, 2024 through November 30, 2024</p>	<p>Maintain 16 previously developed springs by checking for broken pipes and repairing as necessary.</p> <p>Maintain 30 water sources by inspecting and making any necessary repairs to the ponds, springs, guzzlers, and water troughs.</p> <p>Install 1 new guzzler near Campbell Creek.</p> <p>Mechanically treat (by crushing with a bulldozer or masticating) at least 15 acres of decadent brush annually to encourage the growth of nutritious deer forage.</p> <p>Restrict off-road vehicle use within the recent brush treatment areas and minimize disturbance to wildlife.</p> <p>Spray invasive plants including star thistle and Italian thistle.</p>
<p>Capistran Ranch Deer Zone B1 Mendocino 14,510 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 20 deer of which no more than 15 may be forked-horn or better buck deer and 5 may be antlerless deer, 2 bull elk, and 2 antlerless elk</p> <p>Issue 10 either-sex deer tags for the period of August 1, 2024 through November 30, 2024</p> <p>No antlerless deer shall be harvested before September 15, 2024.</p> <p>No more than 10 buck deer may be harvested after October 27, 2024.</p>	<p>Managed livestock grazing (no more than 500 cow/calf pairs on 13,200 acres) for the period of November 15 through June 20 annually will be used to manage invasive plant species and thatch build up.</p> <p>Masticate at least 10 acres of decadent brush annually to create browsing opportunities.</p> <p>Manage invasive plants by focused high-intensity, short-term grazing.</p> <p>Maintain 24 springs by checking the flow and wildlife escape ramps and repairing any damaged parts.</p>

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
PLM Area License
5-Year Management Plan Renewals, 2024-2028
Proposed Seasons, Harvests, and Habitat Improvements

PLM Area	2024 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
<p>Capistran Ranch Cont.</p>	<p>On or before October 15, 2024, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 10 additional either-sex tags to accomplish the authorized harvest.</p> <p>Issue 2 bull elk tags for the period of August 1, 2024 through December 1, 2024</p> <p>Issue 2 antlerless elk tags for the period of September 15, 2024 through December 1, 2024</p>	<p>Exclude trespass livestock from USFS and BLM grazing allotments by inspecting and repairing the boundary fence.</p> <p>Replace the nesting material in 4 bluebird nest boxes. Boxes will be relocated if not used the previous season.</p> <p>Maintain 10 wood duck nest boxes annually.</p> <p>Maintain 8 elk crossings annually.</p> <p>Construct 15 brush piles for wildlife cover and oak seedling protection. The 20 foot x 5-foot pile will be created using slash from down trees and brush and will be located near a routinely used water source.</p> <p>Maintain and monitor 2 approximately 1,000-sq. foot food plots spread out over the property and in areas where green summer browse is limited. Each food plot is fenced from cattle and wild pigs. Each will have a motion-sensing camera to record day and night deer activity. The annual report will include a table of total number and composition of deer photographed.</p> <p>Using a tractor, create a 6 foot wide by 300 foot long trail through decadent chaparral to provide access and new palatable forage for wildlife.</p> <p>Maintain 20 mallard hen nest tubes annually.</p> <p>Treat 10 acres of yellow star thistle with appropriate herbicide annually.</p> <p>At least 5 acres of elk and deer forage will be planted and irrigated through the summer months.</p>

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Proposed Seasons, Harvests, and Habitat Improvements

PLM Area	2024 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
<p>Four Pines Ranch</p> <p>Deer Zone B1</p> <p>Mendocino</p> <p>2,001 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 12 forked-horn or better buck deer and 4 antlerless deer</p> <p>Issue 12 buck deer tags and 4 antlerless deer tags for the period of July 16, 2024 through November 30, 2024</p> <p>No more than 6 buck deer may be harvested after October 27, 2024.</p> <p>No antlerless deer shall be harvested before September 15, 2024.</p>	<p>Maintain at least 7 previously improved springs and 3 existing ponds.</p> <p>Develop 1 additional spring site for wildlife use.</p> <p>Maintain all previously established forage plots with legume mix for wildlife use.</p> <p>Develop 0.25-acre forage plot for enhanced wildlife browse opportunity.</p> <p>Treat at least 3 acres annually of invasive weeds through hand manipulation, herbicides or vegetation management plan burns with CalFire to encourage native vegetation growth.</p> <p>Remove at least 100 feet of unnecessary interior fence to enhance wildlife passage.</p> <p>Create at least a 1 acre opening through dense brush to enhance browse feeding opportunities for wildlife.</p> <p>Remove encroaching conifer seedlings and saplings in at least 3 acres of oak woodlands.</p> <p>Restrict livestock grazing to no more than 50 head of cattle during the winter and spring. In addition manage grazing to only assigned pastures during the specific grazing season.</p> <p>Plant at least 25 willow shoots annually at existing water sources; there will be an expected 75% survival of these shoots after the second year or replanting will be required the next season.</p> <p>Create at least 2 brush piles measuring at least 6 feet high and 15 feet in diameter annually. Older piles (at least 5 years old) will be burned.</p>

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5-Year Management Plan Renewals, 2024-2028
Proposed Seasons, Harvests, and Habitat Improvements

PLM Area	2024 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
<p>Redwood House Ranch Deer Zone B1 Humboldt 8,419 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 20 either-sex deer of which no more than 10 may be antlerless deer and 1 bull elk</p> <p>Issue 20 either-sex deer tags for the period of August 10, 2024 through November 30, 2024</p> <p>Issue antlerless deer may be harvested for the period of October 1, 2024 through November 30, 2024</p> <p>No more than 7 buck deer may be harvested after October 27, 2024.</p> <p>Issue 1 bull elk tag for the period of August 1, 2024 through October 31, 2024</p>	<p>Treat at least 200 acres of oak woodlands by removing encroaching conifers less than or equal to 12 inches DBH from oak woodlands and prairies.</p>
<p>Schneider Ranch Deer Zone B1 Mendocino 5,222 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 6 forked-horn or better buck deer</p> <p>Issue 6 buck deer tags for the period of August 1, 2024 through November 30, 2024</p> <p>No more than 3 buck deer may be harvested after October 27, 2024.</p>	<p>Burn or mechanically treat at least 7 acres of decadent brush annually.</p> <p>Cultivate with equipment and irrigate the 1-acre Cabin food plot, which provides a year-round deer feeding area annually.</p> <p>Create at least 6 brush piles for wildlife cover. The piles will each be approximately 10 feet in diameter and 6 feet tall and will provide good habitat for both deer and quail.</p> <p>Burn at least 6 brush piles. The remnant charcoal and ashes are nutrient rich and deer roll in them, perhaps for control of external parasites.</p> <p>Inspect 6 previously improved springs and repair any damaged parts, clear any brush that is intruding on the collection</p>

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PLM Area	2024 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Schneider Ranch Cont.		<p>galleries, cleaning out accumulated debris and mud, and ensure the box is structurally sound.</p> <p>Exclude all livestock from the ranch.</p>
<p>Smith River PLM</p> <p>Del Norte</p> <p>25,229 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 4 bull elk and 6 antlerless elk</p> <p>Issue 4 bull elk tags for the period of August 1, 2024 through October 31, 2024</p> <p>On or before October 15, 2024, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 1 additional bull tag to accomplish the harvest goal.</p> <p>In no case shall the number of tags issued be used to exceed the authorized harvest.</p> <p>The number of tag holders actively hunting shall not exceed the number of elk available to harvest.</p> <p>Issue 6 antlerless elk tags for the period of September 4, 2024 through October 31, 2024</p>	<p>Within the 5-year term, provide and deliver 30 merchantable trees 12 inches-24 inches DBH to project site. Enhance Coho salmon habitat in Rowdy Creek and/or Savoy Creek through the placement of 30-40-foot-long tree segments with root wads attached to be placed instream for large woody debris habitat for salmonids.</p> <p>At least 125 acres of invasive plant species will be treated with herbicide, hand tools, and/or heavy equipment. Treated areas will be revegetated with reseeded and/or planted with native species. Effectiveness monitoring will occur post treatment.</p> <p>3 wood duck boxes will be installed and annually monitored and maintained.</p>

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CENTRAL REGION		
PLM Area	2024 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
<p>Carrizo Ranch San Luis Obispo County 27,056 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 3 bull elk, 2 antlerless elk, 5 forked-horn or better buck deer and 4 antlerless deer</p> <p>Issue 3 bull elk tags for the period of July 15, 2024 through December 1, 2024</p> <p>Issue 3 antlerless elk tags for the period of September 15, 2024 through December 1, 2024</p> <p>Issue 5 buck deer tags for the period of July 15, 2024 through December 31, 2024</p> <p>Issue 3 antlerless deer tags for the period of September 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024</p>	<p>Burn tule grass at Big Spring.</p> <p>Managed and appropriately timed grazing to improve habitat.</p> <p>Leave gates open to ease movement between pastures and neighboring properties (CDFW and Nature Conservancy lands).</p> <p>Manage invasive plants.</p> <p>Install basking structures for turtles at Big Spring.</p>
<p>Gabilan Ranch Deer Zone A Monterey 10,000 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 3 bull elk and 1 antlerless elk</p> <p>Issue 3 bull elk tags for the period of July 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024</p> <p>Gabilan Ranch is not requesting their antlerless elk tag for the 2024 season.</p>	<p>Maintain perennial water for wildlife and water retention devices and pipes as needed.</p> <p>Burn 200 acres of decadent brush to improve forage for wildlife.</p> <p>Remove cattle in May to provide feed and reduce competition for wildlife.</p> <p>Treat 0.50 acre of purple star thistle to enhance and maintain habitats for wildlife.</p> <p>VMP burns, follow Smoke Management Plan with CDF and Monterey Air Quality Control Board in order to improve burn scheduling flexibility.</p>

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PLM Area	2024 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Gabilan Ranch Cont.		<p>Continue an erosion control program to reduce sedimentation in the area creeks.</p> <p>Construct 10 brush piles.</p> <p>Maintain wood duck boxes.</p> <p>Grow out gathering field between March and May.</p> <p>Contribute to CDFW chronic wasting disease surveillance by providing samples from harvested elk.</p>
<p>Hearst Ranch</p> <p>San Luis Obispo</p> <p>5,381 Acres</p>	<p>Authorized Harvest: 6 bull elk and 6 antlerless elk</p> <p>Issue 2 bull elk tags for the period of July 15, 2024 through December 1, 2024</p> <p>Issue 3 antlerless elk tags for the period of September 15, 2024 through December 1, 2024</p>	<p>Improve stock pond for red-legged frogs.</p> <p>Irrigate approximately 152 acres in the Arroyo de la Cruz drainage and, if necessary, seed with native grassed to produce year-round forage for wildlife.</p> <p>Continue rotational grazing practices to meet the standard for 'light' grazing.</p> <p>Exclude livestock with approximately 2.50 miles of fencing from the 105-acre Arroyo de la Cruz riparian corridor during stream flow.</p> <p>Treat 1 acre for Spanish broom using hand pulling and digging. Application of 3% glyphosate or mechanical cutting as needed.</p> <p>Treat 1 acre of jubata grass with hand pulling and application of 2% glyphosate as needed. Control flower plumes by bagging and removing or burning.</p> <p>Install 4 raptor perches.</p> <p>Monitor/repair/replace escape ramps in wildlife troughs.</p>