

Staff Summary for April 16-17, 2025

18C. Department Wildlife and Fisheries Division, and Department Ecosystem Conservation Division Report

Today's Item

Information

Action

The Department will highlight items of note since the last Commission meeting for the Department Wildlife and Fisheries Division and the Ecosystem Conservation Division.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)

Background

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation (N/A)

Exhibits

1. [Department news release: "CDFW Sees 'Ecosystem Engineers' at Work in Beaver Restoration Pilot Project," dated April 7, 2025](#)

Motion (N/A)



CDFW NEWS

April 7, 2025

CDFW Sees ‘Ecosystem Engineers’ at Work in Beaver Restoration Pilot Projects



The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) set out on its mission one-and-a-half years ago to begin returning beavers to watersheds throughout their native range

in the state. Since then, the translocated beavers have begun their work as ecosystem engineers, initiating the restoration of wetlands and building resilience to the effects of climate change such as drought and wildfire.

Today, CDFW announces the release of a [status report](#) on the translocated beavers and restoration sites, summarizing project successes, lessons learned and next steps for beaver restoration in California.

Between October 2023 and September 2024, CDFW placed 28 beavers in the Sierra Nevada at five release sites within two pilot projects, which were launched in partnership with the Tule River Tribe in Southern California and the Maidu Summit Consortium in Northern California.

The translocated beavers have since produced two litters of kits and built dams at three of the release sites. At the most productive release site, beavers have begun to dig a network of canals, reconnected the stream with its floodplain and [increased the surface water area by approximately 23%](#).

As part of the state's Initiative to Expand Nature-Based Solutions, in 2022 CDFW created the Beaver Restoration Program using funding appropriated when Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 1757. The program aims to better understand where, when and how beavers, long thought of as a nuisance species, can be utilized to restore ecosystems and habitats in California. That knowledge will allow CDFW and the state of California to effectively utilize beavers as a nature-based solution in restoring and conserving habitats and watersheds.

"The Beaver Restoration Program was formed because we recognize the value that beavers can provide on a landscape," said CDFW Beaver Restoration Program Supervisor Molly Alves. "We are putting beavers back into those portions of their historic range where they can build dams and create wetlands that protect our landscape, wildlife and people from climate change like drought and wildfire."

In the Maidu Summit Consortium's Tásmam Koyóm valley, which was burned over by the Dixie Fire in 2021, Alves pointed out that since beavers were placed there in October 2023, both available water and wetland habitat have been expanded by the busy beavers. They built a 100-meter dam across the wetland complex — the largest dam in the area that is just downstream from where the beavers decided to place their lodge. Beavers build dams that hold deeper water to allow for predator avoidance and increase the abundance of and access to preferred food sources.

To date, survival of the translocated beavers is estimated to be between 40-60%, with the primary causes of mortality being predation and illnesses related to underlying conditions (e.g., pneumonia) and capture-related stressors.

"Beavers used to be everywhere, but sadly that is no longer the case," said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham. "Our history treated beavers as nuisances, and we removed them from the landscape. In the past year CDFW working with the Tule River

Tribe and the Maidu Summit Consortium brought beavers home to places they've been absent over 100 years.

"Beavers are nature's Swiss Army knife. The things they can do are amazing. We are finding in some of our scientific work that when beavers are on the landscape in the Sierra, the way they can create wet meadows serves as a fire break that can slow down or even stop catastrophic wildfire," added Director Bonham.

CDFW's status report also details the process for submitting beaver restoration project proposals (i.e., translocation requests), identifying priority projects for future implementation and selecting beavers for translocation. Additionally, to better understand the current distribution of beavers in California, CDFW is asking for the public's participation through an online [Beaver Observation Survey Tool](#).

[Follow this link](#) to watch a video about the translocated beavers, CDFW's post-release monitoring activities and pilot project ecosystem restoration progress.

Media note: Download report, photos and video [here](#).

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