4. Five-Year Private Lands Management (PLM) Plans and Licenses (consent)

Today's Item Information ☐ Action ☒

Consider approving five-year PLM plans and 2025-2029 licenses.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)

Background

California Fish and Game Code subdivision 3402(a) states that an application for a wildlife habitat enhancement and management area license may be issued by the Department upon approval by the Commission; subdivision 3406(c) requires that the activities conducted pursuant to a private lands wildlife habitat enhancement and management (PLM) plan shall be reviewed annually by the Department and by the Commission at a public hearing. Licenses for such areas may be granted by the Commission for a period of five years following department review and approval of the management plan (Title 14, California Code of Regulations Section 601(a)).

The conditions for a PLM program provide 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 management plan for 17 properties in 6 counties consisting of approximately 264,118 acres. 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 they are in compliance with Commission regulations and policies for PLM licenses and plans.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation

Commission staff: Approve 5-year PLM license renewals for 2025-2029, and proposed seasons, harvests and habitat improvements for 2025-2029 as recommended by the Department for 17 properties, under a motion to adopt the consent calendar.

Department: For nine properties, approve the five-year PLM license renewal applications, wildlife management plans, and proposed 2025-26 harvest programs (consisting of seasons, tags, and habitat improvements) under the conditions specified in Exhibit 2.

Exhibits

- 1. Department memo, received April 3, 2025
- 2. <u>"PLM Area License 5-Year Renewals, 2025-2029, Proposed Seasons, Harvests, and</u> Habitat Improvements," received April 3, 2025

Author. Kelsey Leaird 1

Staff Summary for April 16-17, 2025

Motion		
Moved by	and seconded by	that the Commission adopts the staff
recommendations	for items 3-5 on the consent	calendar.

Author: Kelsey Leaird 2

State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Memorandum

Signed original on file, Received April 3, 2025

Date: March 27, 2025

To: Melissa Miller- Henson

Executive Director

Fish and Game Commission

From: Charlton H. Bonham

Director

Subject: Agenda Item for the April 16-17, 2025 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 1 new property in 1 county consisting of approximately 692 acres and the 5-year renewals for 17 properties in 6 counties consisting of approximately 264,118 acres. Additionally, the Department has reviewed the annual reports for 40 properties in 12 counties consisting of approximately 398,336 acres.

The Department recommends that the Commission approve the wildlife management plans, applications, and each 2025/26 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 11-12 meeting.

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

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director Fish and Game Commission March 27, 2025 Page 2

Attachment

ec: Chad Dibble, Deputy Director Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Scott Gardner, Branch Chief Wildlife Branch

Mario Klip, Environmental Program Manager Wildlife Branch

Victoria Barr, Environmental Scientist Wildlife Branch

NORTHERN REGION		
PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Ackerman-South Daugherty WMA Deer Zone A Mendocino 10,831 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 18 forked-horn or better buck deer Issue 18 buck deer tags for the period of July 15, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No more than 9 buck deer tags may be harvested after September 21, 2025. On or before October 15, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 10 additional buck tags to accomplish the authorized harvest. In no case shall the number of tags issued be used to exceed the authorized harvest. The number of tag holders actively hunting shall not exceed the number of deer available to harvest.	Treatment of at least 100 acres of oak woodlands and/or prairie will be treated during this licensee period. All firs <12" Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) will be removed. Trees >12" DBH will be removed except in unstable areas and Watercourse and Lake Protection Zone (WLPZ) zones. 135 acres of yellow star thistle will be treated using herbicide. 5 brush piles will be made from the slash.
Amann Ranch Mendocino 375 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 1 bull elk and 1 antlerless elk Issue 1 bull elk tag for the period of August 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025. Issue 1 antlerless elk tag for the period of September 15, 2025, through November 30, 2025. On or before October 15, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 1 additional bull elk tag to complete the authorized harvest.	Irrigate and sub-irrigate at least 190 acres of pasture for use by wildlife. Disc and reseed at least 20 acres annually of pasture areas with pasture mix #2. Plant at least 100 willow shoots along wetland areas. Install 5 new elk friendly fence crossing and repair 5 damaged elk friendly fence crossings. Maintain 125 cattle to reduce competition with elk for forage. Cattle and horses will be removed from the pastures in October and allow for wildlife use.

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Amann Ranch Cont.	On or before October 15, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 1 additional antlerless elk tags to complete the authorized harvest.	Maintain 16 water troughs and water tankers by ensuring they are holding adequate water for wildlife and install escape ramps. Mow, disc and reseed 25 acres in the yellow star thistle treatment area. Leave unharvested the second cutting of hay on 342 acres. This will retain approximately 100 tons of forage accessible to elk. Preserve the Tricolored blackbird habitat. Install 8 Western bluebird boxes. Maintain previously installed boxes annually through monitoring and cleaning out of nest waste. Install 1 Wood duck nest box. Annual maintenance of previously installed boxes through monitoring and cleaning out of nest waste and addition of wood
Big Lagoon Humboldt 113,933 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 5 bull elk and 2 antlerless elk Issue 5 bull elk tags for the period of August 1, 2025, through October 31, 2025. On or before October 1, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 1 additional bull elk tag to accomplish the authorized harvest. In no case shall the number of tags issued be used to exceed the authorized harvest.	At least 50 acres of oak woodlands and adjacent grasslands will be treated to remove all encroaching conifers. Provide 25 merchantable trees with root wads attached for installation into the Upper South Fork Little River Instream Habitat Improvement Project salmonid spawning and rearing habitat project.

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Big Lagoon Cont.	The number of tag holders actively hunting shall not exceed the number of elk available to harvest. Issue 2 antlerless elk tags for the period of September 4, 2025, through November 30, 2025.	
Bridges Ranch Deer Zone A Mendocino 1,144 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 10 forked-horn or better buck deer Issue 10 buck deer tags for the period of July 12, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No more than 5 buck deer may be harvested after September 21, 2025.	Burn at least 20 acres annually of decadent brush through the CAL FIRE Vegetation Management Program (VMP). Remove at least 10 large conifer trees at least 80 feet in height from oak woodland areas. Create at least 5 brush piles annually measuring at least 15 feet in diameter and 6 feet high. Install 2 additional wood duck nesting boxes near the lake. Maintain all previously installed boxes through cleaning out of nest waste, replacing shavings and make any needed repairs.
Carley Ranch Deer Zone B1 Mendocino 1,660 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 15 forked-horn or better buck deer Issue 8 buck deer tags for the period of August 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No more than 7 buck deer may be harvested after October 26, 2025. On or before October 15, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 7 additional buck deer tags to accomplish the authorized harvest.	Burn 100 acres in the annual grasslands and chaparral. If this burning cannot be accomplished, brush rake removal of at least 5 acres of montane chaparral will occur. Maintain all previously developed water sources (3 springs, 6 guzzlers, and 6 associated water tanks) to provide water for wildlife. Maintenance includes repairing broken and deteriorating pipes and other components. Maintain wildlife-friendly livestock exclusion fencing around developed springs and repairing any damage.

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Carley Ranch Cont.		Irrigate the 2 acres of food plots during the dry season. These plots are fenced with wildlife-friendly fencing to exclude livestock.
		Maintenance of 16 fruit trees have been planted and protected with wire fencing to provide a wildlife food source.
		4-acre dry land food plot will be maintained by the river. Food plot has been planted with Ca. red oats, white clover and Strawberry clover.
		Road maintenance and erosion control practices will be completed on roads.
		Livestock grazing on the ranch will be limited to no more than 25 pairs from November 1 through July 1 annually.
Klamath PLM	Authorized Harvest: 2 bull elk and 2 antierless elk	At least 180 acres of oak woodlands and adjacent grasslands will be treated to
Humboldt	Issue 2 bull elk tags for the	remove all encroaching conifers.
32,594 Acres	period of August 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025.	Replace at least 1 spring box and trough will be replaced to provide water for wildlife.
	On or before October 1, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 1 additional bull elk tag to accomplish the authorized harvest.	wilding.
	In no case shall the number of tags issued be used to exceed the authorized harvest.	
	The number of tag holders actively hunting shall not exceed the number of elk available to harvest.	
	Issue 2 antlerless elk tags for the period of September 3, 2025, through November 30, 2025.	

Pennacchio Ranch (formerly Christensen Ranch) Deer Zone B1 Mendocino 872 Acres Authorized Harvest: 10 deer of which no more than 8 may be forked-horn or better buck deer and 2 may be antlerless deer Lisue 10 either-sex deer tags for the period of August 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No antlerless deer shall be Lisue 10 either-sex deer tags for the period of August 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No antlerless deer shall be	PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
No more than 5 buck deer may be harvested after October 26, 2025. On or before October 15, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 5 additional either-sex tags to accomplish the authorized harvest. The number of tag holders actively hunting shall not exceed the number of tags issued be used to exceed the authorized harvest. In no case shall the number of tags issued be used to exceed the authorized harvest. In stall escape ramps in all troughs. Annual maintenance on 7 previously developed springs and repair any broken water pipes. Plant in the spring and fall by seeding California Brome grass, Blue Wildrye grass, Meadow barley, Purple needlegrass, and Wild plantain. Exclude cattle from the ranch; no cattle leases are proposed under the PLM 5-year management plan. Remove conifers up to 12" DBH from oak woodlands. Create at least 3 slash piles that are at least 6 feet high and 10 feet wide at the base. Install escape ramps in all troughs.	Ranch (formerly Christensen Ranch) Deer Zone B1 Mendocino	which no more than 8 may be forked-horn or better buck deer and 2 may be antlerless deer Issue 10 either-sex deer tags for the period of August 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No antlerless deer shall be harvested before September 15, 2025. No more than 5 buck deer may be harvested after October 26, 2025. On or before October 15, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 5 additional either-sex tags to accomplish the authorized harvest. The number of tag holders actively hunting shall not exceed the number of deer available to harvest. In no case shall the number of tags issued be used to exceed	chances of sediment run off into nearby watercourses and the Eel River. Continue to promote bald eagle nesting through the retention of snags and large trees. Install 2 new water troughs attached to the current water system. Install escape ramps in all troughs. Annual maintenance on 7 previously developed springs and repair any broken water pipes. Plant in the spring and fall by seeding California Brome grass, Blue Wildrye grass, Meadow barley, Purple needlegrass, and Wild plantain. Exclude cattle from the ranch; no cattle leases are proposed under the PLM 5-year management plan. Remove conifers up to 12" DBH from oak woodlands. Create at least 3 slash piles that are at least 6 feet high and 10 feet wide at the base. Install 2 new Wood duck nesting boxes and maintain the 3 previously installed

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Rainbow Ridge PLM Humboldt Deer Zone B4 21,300 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 15 forked-horn or better buck deer Issue 15 buck deer tags for the period of August 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No more than 8 buck deer may be harvested after September 28, 2025.	Treatment of at least 100 acres of conifer removal ≤12" DBH from oak woodlands and prairies in units H, I, J, L, and M. These units may be burned to improve foraging habitat.
Seven Springs Ranch Deer Zone A Mendocino 2,250 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 9 forked-horn or better buck deer Issue 9 buck deer tags for the period of July 12, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No more than 4 buck deer may be harvested after September 15, 2025.	Exclude livestock grazing from the PLM area to increase habitat quality for wildlife. Plant 0.125 acres of clover and vetch seed on washouts along roads and slides annually. Cut and mechanically treat, by uprooting, approximately 5 acres of young Douglas fir which are growing on ridges within the oak woodland area on Middle Ridge and Cow Springs. Browse improvement on at least 1 acre of lower canopy of non-mast producing trees to produce browse. Mechanically treat at least 6.25 acres, with heavy equipment, by removing and crushing decadent brush above the root crown (chaparral areas). Will cut the decadent branch growth off willows that were planted in springs and washouts in prior years. Clean out the spring pond on the south end of the ranch to allow access to water for wildlife.

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Six Point Ranch Deer Zone A	Authorized Harvest: 12 forked- horn or better buck deer, 3 bull elk and 5 antlerless elk	Maintain 7 miles of roads and water bars where slopes are greater than 15% to reduce sediment entering waterways.
Deer Zone A Mendocino 3,960 Acres		

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Stackhouse Ranch Shasta Deer Zone C3 400 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 2 deer of which no more than 1 may be antlerless deer Issue 2 either-sex deer tags for the period of September 1, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No antlerless deer shall be harvested before September 15, 2025.	Conduct at least a 5-acre prescribed burn under the mature oak stands annually. Allow regrowth of important brush species to 3 feet in the 100 acres of thinned plantations. Maintain open park-like characteristic of 100 acres of thinned timberland. Plant 5 Black oak seedlings. Complete 10 acre thinning and fuels management project. Control invasive blackberries on 15 acres at the pond and restored meadows through spraying with appropriate herbicide. Control invasive blackberries on 20 acres at the spring riparian area through spraying with appropriate herbicide. Reconstruct 2 nesting islands.
Stewart Ranch Deer Zone B1 Trinity 11,006 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 36 forked-horn or better buck deer and 5 antlerless deer Issue 36 buck deer tags for the period of July 20, 2025, through November 30, 2025. 10 of those tags shall be provided to apprentice or first-time hunters, and 1 shall be donated to a Hunter Education Instructor. Issue 3 antlerless deer tags for the period of September 15, 2025, through November 30, 2025.	Maintain all wildlife food plots. Replant and fertilizer 4 irrigated food plots (10 acres total) with clover, chicory, and brassica to provide forage for wildlife at least every 4 years. Replant and fertilize at least 11 acres of dryland food plots with barley, wheat, oats, plantain, and grains. Maintain 8 water sources (ponds and springs) with cattle exclusion fencing by inspecting and repairing any damaged parts. Remove all encroaching conifers ≤6" DBH from at least 20 acres of oak woodlands.

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Stewart Ranch Cont.	No more than 18 buck deer may be harvested after October 26, 2025. On or before October 15, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 5 additional either-sex deer tags to accomplish the authorized harvest. In no case shall the number of tags issued be used to exceed the authorized harvest. The number of tag holders actively hunting shall not exceed the number of deer available to harvest.	Plant 25 willow or alders around ponds. Maintain the 200-yard buffer Golden Eagle nesting site protection area below "TinaMarie's Rock". Maintain all 15 Wood duck nesting boxes by repairing and replacing damaged boxes and checking annually for nesting activity. Maintain previously installed Western bluebird boxes.
Summer Camp Ranch Deer Zone B1 Mendocino 38,502 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 80 forked-horn or better buck deer and 1 bull elk Issue 80 buck deer tags for the period of July 12, 2025, through November 30, 2025. No more than 40 buck deer may be taken after October 26, 2025. Issue 1 bull elk tag for the period of July 12, 2025, through November 30, 2025. On or before October 15, 2025, the licensee may request (in writing) up to 20 additional buck deer tags and 1 additional bull elk tag to accomplish the authorized harvest.	Maintain 3 irrigated wildlife forage areas, totaling 12.5 acres. Develop 2 new springs east of Garcia Creek for wildlife use. Maintain 17 developed springs by checking and repairing any damage. Maintain and repair fencing. Exclude livestock grazing from July through October. Create Western Pond Turtle basking habitat at Brushy Lake by placing at least two logs at least 12 inches in diameter and a minimum of 15 feet long. Remove planted conifers in 40 acres of grassland areas to improve forage for wildlife.

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Summer Camp Ranch Cont.	In no case shall the number of tags issued be used to exceed the authorized harvest.	Maintain approximately 7 miles of riparian fencing on the Eel River and repair any damage.
	The number of deer or elk tag holders actively hunting shall not exceed the number of deer or elk available to harvest.	Maintain a minimum of 10 miles of road to prevent sedimentation into the Eel River system. Road maintenance will generally include grading roads, pulling inside ditches where they exist, shaping the road surface to promote proper drainage, and inspection/repair of drainage facilities such as cross drains and culverts.
		Burn at least 50 acres of brush and grasslands in coordination with CAL FIRE VMP to rejuvenate vegetation and control conifers invading oak woodlands.
		Burns throughout the 5-year period with the CAL FIRE VMP are dependent upon conditions, if burning cannot be conducted during the five-year project, 40 acres of planted ponderosa pine in grassland areas will be treated for conifer removal as an alternative.

CENTRAL REGION		
PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Bardin Ranch Deer Zone A Monterey 8,000 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 2 bull elk (every other year), and 4 antlerless elk (annually) Issue 2 bull elk tags for the period of October 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025.	Maintain all water supplies, springs, water troughs, and dams and remove brush in springs. Establish new water features as necessary. Plant forage crop in Gabilan Canyon.

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Bardin Ranch Cont.	Issue 4 antlerless elk tags for the period of October 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025.	Mechanically remove and stack brush to create wildlife cover habitat. Continue rotational cattle grazing. Construct elk crossings as needed. Investigate the possibilities of improving habitat for our native pollinator's populations. Provide either 2 bat roosts, owl boxes, or raptor perches annually. Contribute to CDFW disease surveillance in deer and elk by providing samples to improve statewide chronic wasting disease surveillance. Support game wardens and CDFW staff access for wildlife research and management efforts (game counts, biological surveys, capture/collar efforts, etc.).
Carnaza Ranch San Luis Obispo 8,475 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 3 bull elk and 3 antlerless elk Issue 3 bull elk tags for the period of July 15, 2025, through December 31, 2025. Issue 3 antlerless elk tags for the period of September 15, 2025, through December 31, 2025.	Plant 100 acres of barley for wildlife. Plant dove and quail forage strips. Plant 10 trees. Keep water troughs full year-round.

PLM Area	2025 Proposed Season and Harvest	Habitat Improvement Program
Clark & White Ranch	Authorized Harvest: 3 bull elk and 2 antlerless elk	Plant 1,000 acres of barley for use by elk and other wildlife.
San Luis Obispo 5,660 Acres	Issue 3 bull elk tags for the period of July 15, 2025, through December 15, 2025. 2 antlerless elk tags for the period of September 15, 2025, through December 15, 2025.	Repair 1 dam to increase standing water and enhance riparian/marsh habitats.
D Rafter "L" Ranch San Luis Obispo 3,156 Acres	Authorized Harvest: 2 bull elk and 1 antlerless elk Issue 2 bull elk tags for the period of July 15, 2025, through December 31, 2025. 1 antlerless elk tag for the period of September 15, 2025, through December 31, 2025.	Maintain existing brush piles for small animal cover by adding new brush to tops/edges of existing brush piles. Create 3 new brush piles for small animal cover. Maintain goose platforms at Ponds 2 and 3. Maintain oak trees for mast production. Leave downed woody debris for wildlife use. Maintain operation status of wildlife water projects installed under previous PLM Management Plan.