

## Committee Staff Summary for May 15, 2025 WRC

**3. Periodic Regulation Changes****Today's Item****Information** ☒**Action** ☐

Initial vetting for 2026-27 seasons:

- (A) Upland (resident) game bird hunting
- (B) Department lands
- (C) Big game hunting
  - I. Deer
  - II. Elk
  - III. Bighorn sheep
  - IV. Pronghorn antelope
  - V. Black bear

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions**

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| • <b>Today's initial vetting</b>            | <b>May 15, 2025; WRC</b> |
| • Discussion and potential recommendation   | September 11, 2025; WRC  |
| • Present recommendations to the Commission | October 8-9, 2025        |

**Background**

When amendments to regulations are regularly sought for a particular subject (e.g., deer hunting), but are not required every year, they are referred to as "periodic" rulemakings. This item is an opportunity to engage in initial discussions with the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC), staff, and Department staff about recommended regulation changes for periodic rulemakings.

***Upland (Resident) Game Bird Hunting (2026-27)***

Resident upland game bird species include, among others, California quail, pheasant, wild turkey, chukar, and Eurasian collared-dove. Greater sage-grouse is also a resident game bird, though hunting has been disallowed since June of 2023 when it was declared a candidate species under the California Endangered Species Act.

Section 300 provides definitions, hunting zone descriptions, season opening and closing dates, and daily bag and possession limits for resident and migratory upland game birds; the Commission periodically considers recommendations for amendments to these regulations.

***Department Lands***

Commission regulations in sections 550, 551 and 630 provide the regulatory framework for public use of lands owned, managed, and/or administered by the Department, known as ecological reserves and wildlife areas. Public uses that may be allowed, limited, or prohibited include hiking, fishing, hunting, dog trialing, boating, non-motorized bicycle riding, camping, swimming, fires, and more.

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The primary purposes of wildlife areas are to facilitate wildlife conservation and provide opportunities for compatible recreational uses (pursuant to California Fish and Game Code sections 1525 through 1530); uses include hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, photography, environmental education, and research.

The primary purposes of ecological reserves are to conserve threatened or endangered plants and/or animals, and/or specialized habitat types (pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1580), to provide opportunities for the public to observe native plants and wildlife, and to provide opportunities for environmental research (Fish and Game Code Section 1584). Recreation on ecological reserves must be compatible with the conservation of the property's biological resources.

Per the Commission's policy on [Designation and Regulation of Department Lands](#), annually the Department provides a review of undesignated lands for which the Department has gained management control, proposals for additions and amendments to public uses on designated Department lands or potential transfer of lands, petitions for regulation changes that have been granted by the Commission but not yet considered in a rulemaking related to Department lands, and any proposals for system-wide Department lands regulations.

### ***Big Game Hunting (2026-27)***

The Commission periodically adjusts various regulations related to hunting big game mammals, defined in Section 350 as deer (genus *Odocoileus*), elk (genus *Cervus*), pronghorn antelope (genus *Antilocarpa*), black bear (genus *Ursus*), and Nelson bighorn sheep (subspecies *Ovis canadensis nelsoni* in certain defined areas of the state). Sections that define the seasons, quotas, bag and possession limits, hunt zones, SHARE Program tags, tag drawing system, disease management, etc. for each species include sections 351 through 367.5, sections 554 through 555.1, and sections 708.1 through 708.19.

### ***Initial Vetting***

This meeting is an initial opportunity for interested parties to make suggestions to WRC and the Department regarding potential regulation changes for each of the subjects identified under periodic regulation changes. The second opportunity for discussing the ideas generated during this meeting will be the September 11, 2025 WRC meeting, where WRC will potentially develop recommendations for the Commission, before the respective notice hearings for each rulemaking.

Today, the Department will present its initial ideas for rulemakings on these topics (Exhibit 1).

### **Significant Public Comments**

1. Ten commenters assert that bear populations and conflicts are increasing (often citing personal experiences with bears). Suggestions include issuing more depredation permits, trapping, and using contraception. Some suggest hazing bears with dogs while others oppose that particular strategy. Three samples are provided in Exhibit 2.
2. Eight commenters state that human behaviors are the cause of conflicts with bears, oppose additional bear hunting tags (or, alternatively, suggest no bear hunting), and urge coexistence with bears. Three samples are provided in Exhibit 3.

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**Recommendation (N/A)**

**Exhibits**

1. [Department presentation](#)
2. [Emails from Russell Crawford, Eric Foster-Moore, and the Metts family](#), received April 30-May 1, 2025
3. [Emails from Lindsey Rodni-Nieman, Angelique Carl, and Laurel Riggins](#), received April 30, 2025

**Committee Direction/Recommendation (N/A)**



# UPLAND (RESIDENT) GAME BIRD HUNTING

Introduction of Potential Regulatory Change Concepts to the  
Wildlife Resources Committee of the California Fish and Game Commission

May 15, 2025

Wildlife Branch, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

# Upland (Resident) Game Birds

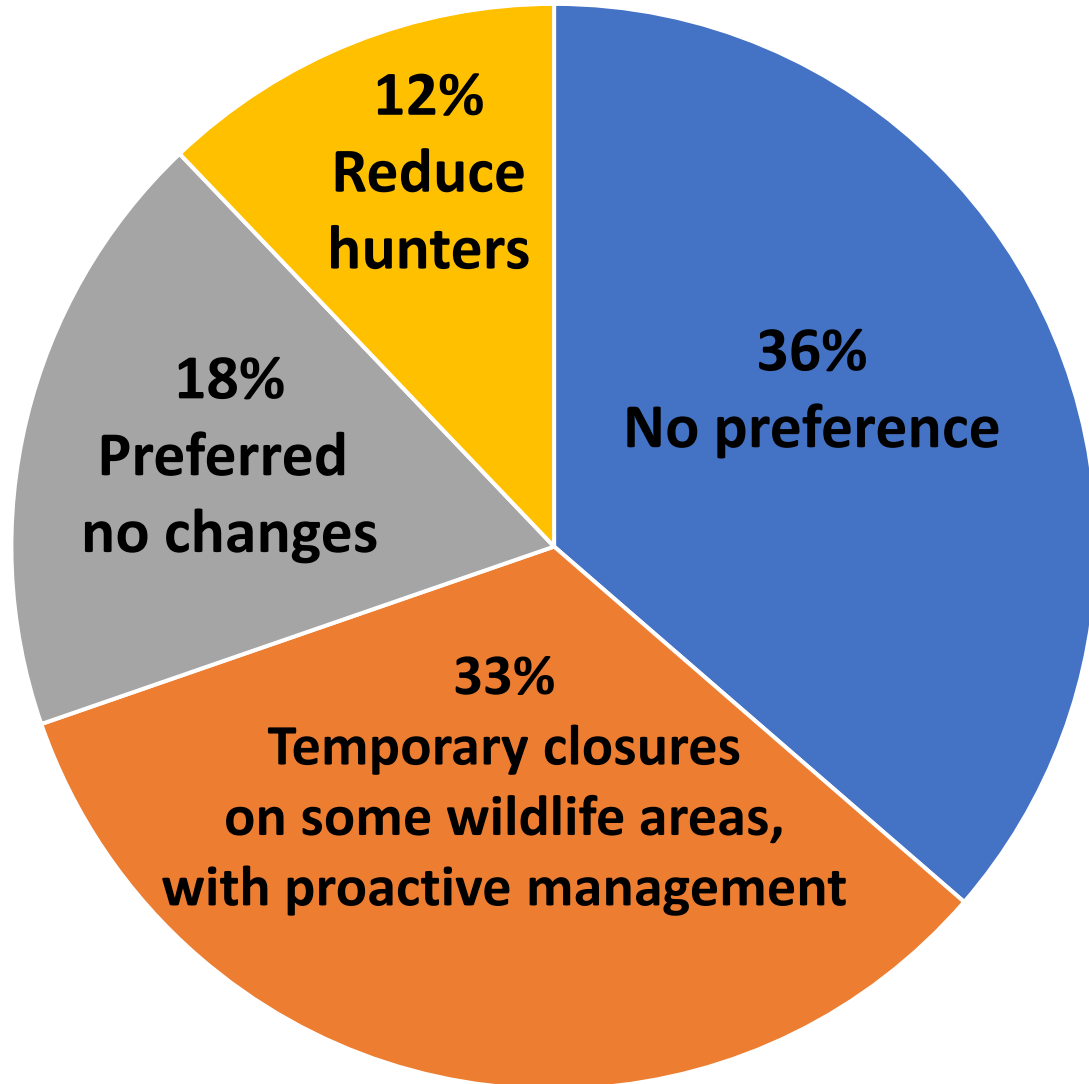
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## Program notes:

- Decline in pheasant population and harvest
- Upland Game Unit conducted a hunter survey in summer 2024
- The survey presented scenarios for changes to pheasant and spring turkey hunting regulations
- Respondents did not indicate enough interest in changes for turkey hunting, response on pheasant may warrant regulatory changes



# Hunter Preference Regarding Scenarios for Changes to Pheasant Hunting Regulations



## Next Steps:

- Engage with stakeholders
- Discuss implications of these scenarios and science that would support an adaptive management strategy



# BIG GAME HUNTING

Introduction of Potential Regulatory Change Concepts to the  
Wildlife Resources Committee of the California Fish and Game Commission

May 15, 2025

Wildlife Branch, California Department of Fish and Wildlife



# BLACK-TAILED AND MULE DEER HUNTING

Program notes:

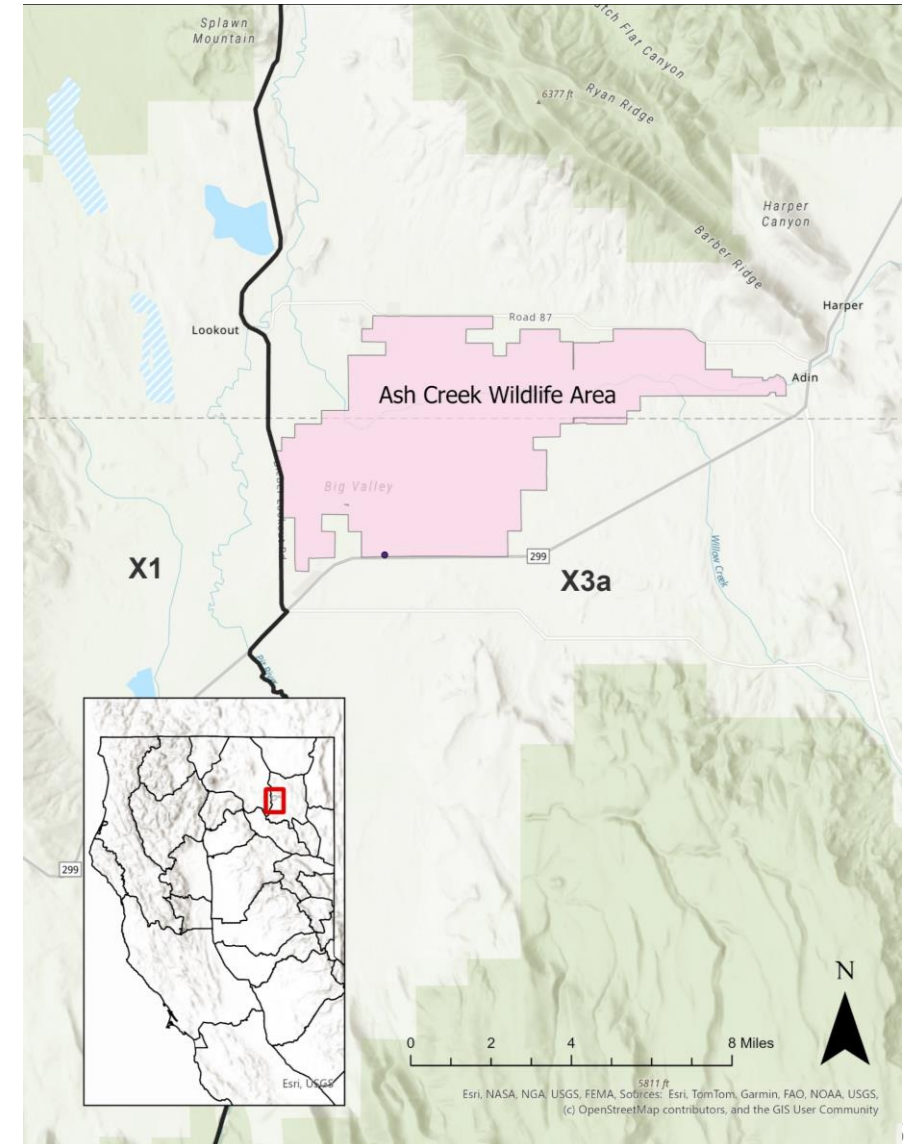
- Working on Draft Deer Conservation and Management Plan
- Ongoing population assessment
- Not taking on major changes to hunting until plan is complete
- Exploring minor changes
- Potential quota reductions based on updated population estimates currently in progress
- Apprentice buck hunt opportunities





# Candidate: Ash Creek Wildlife Area

- Ash Creek Wildlife Area (ACWA) is centrally located in Big Valley, which is otherwise surrounded by private land.
- Currently lacks publicly accessible deer hunting opportunities.
- Private Land Management (PLM) tags in area are cost-prohibitive for many hunters.
- Hosting an apprentice hunt at ACWA would create affordable hunting opportunities for youth and families.
- An event would also bring economic benefits to an historically disadvantaged rural community.





## ELK HUNTING

Program notes:

- Department continues to assess elk populations
- Many populations are stable, and some are expanding
- Human-elk conflict continues to be an issue in localized areas

Concepts:

- Increase hunter opportunity
- Reduce conflict as needed
- Review all tag types to optimize concept success



# Candidates: Increase Elk Hunting Opportunities

- Adjust tag quotas or season dates in any of existing hunt zones
  - Candidate zone: Owens Valley
- Interested in hunt opportunities that may address conflict
- Exploring adaptive management strategies for elk populations occurring outside established hunt zones



# DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING

Program notes:

- Conservation and Management Plan published!
- Interested in expanding hunt program

Concepts:

- New hunt zones
- Change Single Zone Fundraising Tag Zone
- Quota adjustments, as needed



# Candidates: Three New Hunt Zones

Three areas have been identified as candidates for new hunt zones:

- Zone 11: Granite and North Bristol Mountains
- Zone 12: Providence, Wood, and Hackberry Mountains
- Zone 13: Castle Mountains and Piute Range

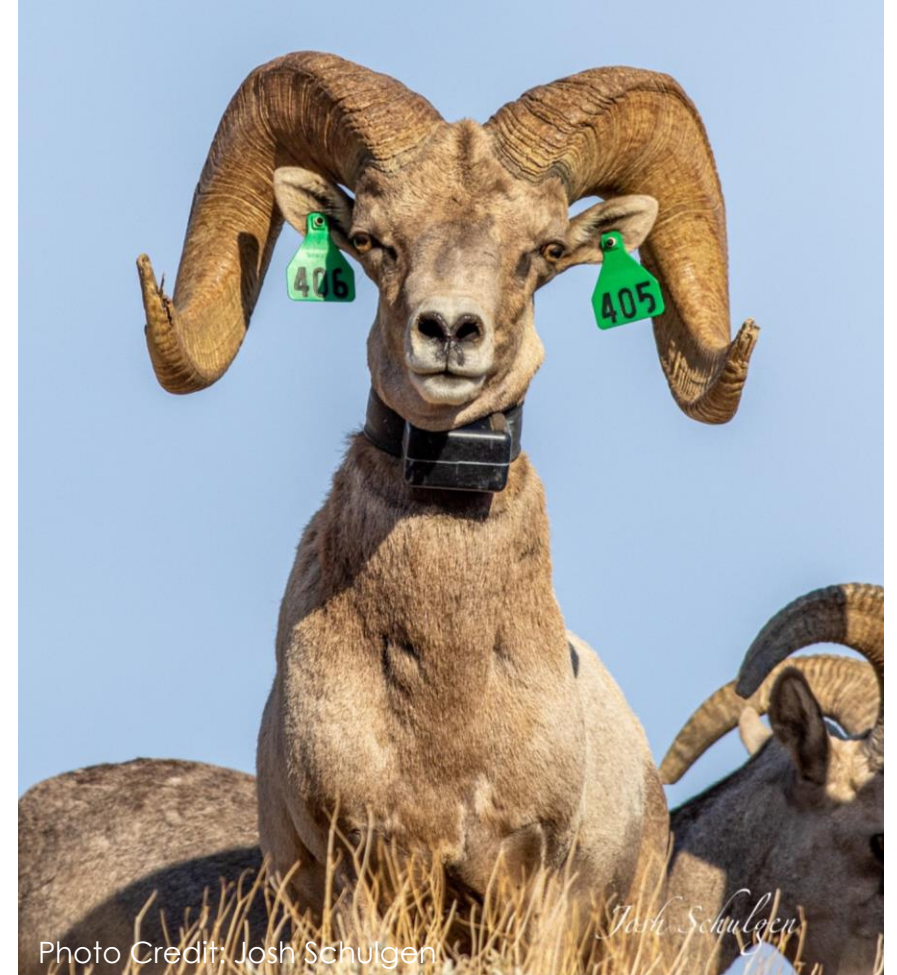


Photo Credit: Josh Schulgen



# Single Zone Fundraising Tags and Tag Quotas



Photo Credit: D. Sims

Based on population surveys, may choose to:

- Change Single Zone Fundraising tag zone
- Adjust tag quotas in any of existing hunt zones



# PRONGHORN HUNTING

Program notes:

- Department continues to assess the status of pronghorn in northeastern California

Concept:

- Based on population surveys, may propose tag quota adjustments in any of existing hunt zones and/or hunt types





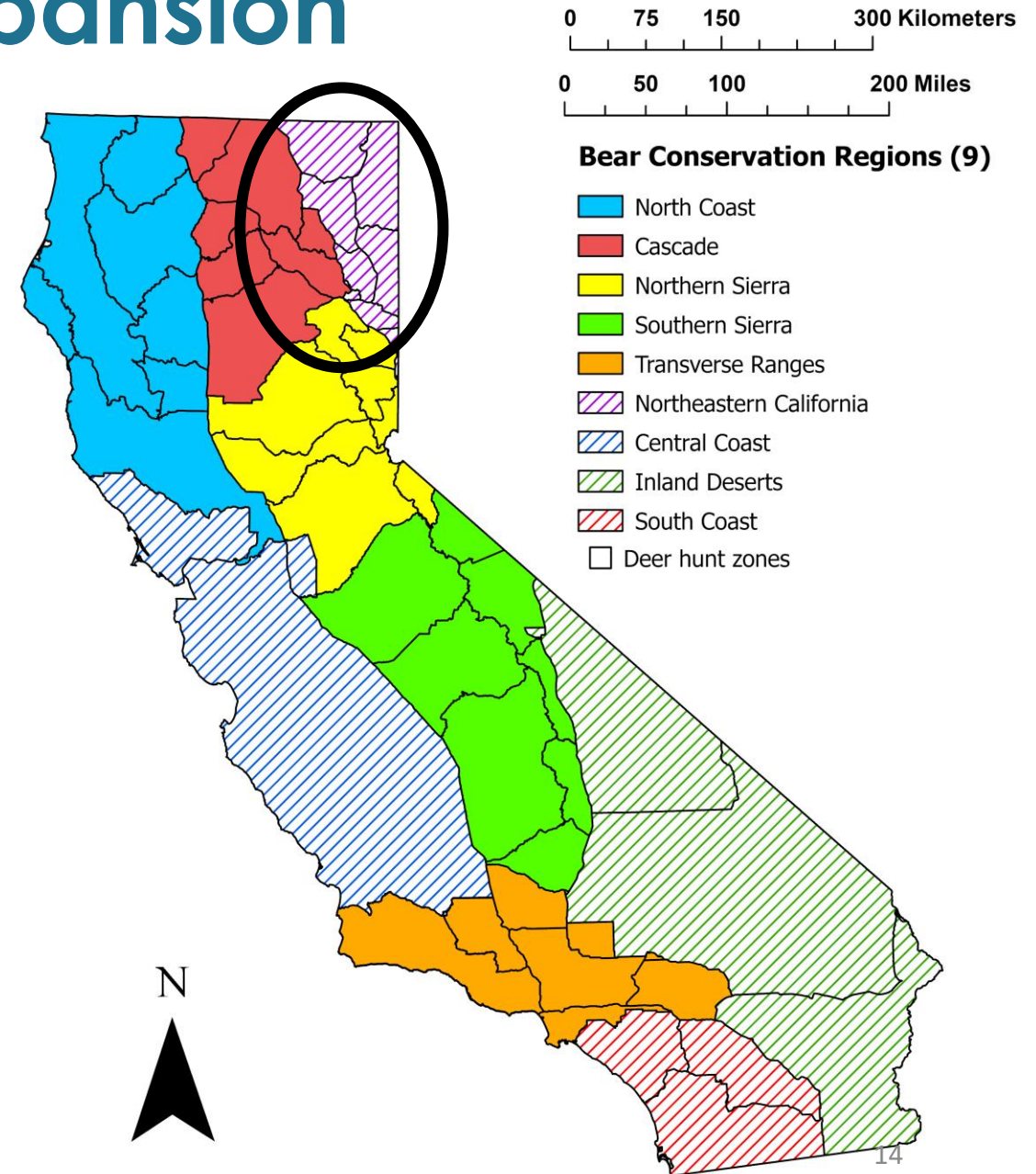
## BLACK BEAR HUNTING

Program notes:

- Black Bear Conservation and Management Plan published
- Interested in increasing harvest opportunity within existing harvest threshold
- No change to harvest threshold in 2026
- Bear hunter survey in development

# Candidate: Hunt Area Expansion

- Current hunt zone does not include Northeastern California Bear Conservation Region (BCR)
- Northeastern California BCR (circled) population estimate: ~2,200
- Explore expanding hunt area to include this portion of the state
- Not to exceed existing harvest threshold





# Candidate: Second Bear Tag

- Current regulations only allow one tag per hunter per season
- Explore offering second bear tag for enthusiastic bear hunters
- Explore best implementation across archery and general seasons
- Not to exceed existing harvest threshold
- This is request from two petitions for regulation change:
  - 2021-017, 2025-05





# Bear Hunter Survey



- Interpret results from the survey
- Consider responses to and feedback on survey for potential regulatory change proposals

**From:** Russell crawford [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 1, 2025 10:46 AM  
**To:** FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** Black bears,

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

WARNING: This message is from an external source. Verify the sender and exercise caution when clicking links or opening attachments.

I have read through the conservation report from CDFW. I found some interesting contradictions. On lines 1097-1099 it refers to the bear population in a decade from 2013-2023 as being stable. Help me understand, with the no dog use change the average yearly take of Bears dropped and average of 521 bears. per year. without compounding that is 5210 more bears. With compounding of 193 females per year producing offspring starting at year 5 the number increases to 11,117 more bears total over 10 years.

I have lived in the same house in Christmas Valley ( Meyers ) for 44 years. the first 30 years I saw one bear and no evidence of any others. Since then I have had bears in my vehicles a dozen times. ( i have had to get better at locking the doors) and in my garage twice. ( must have left a door ajar) It is just accepted that this is what we are going to have do. The report provides evidence that relocation does not work well. I have on two occasions seen sows with 4 cubs. Without the hazing with dogs the bears will never revert back to eating berries and nuts. You wouldn't. And allowing a sow to teach her offspring the fine art of opening windows and breaking down doors for a better forage than in the wild. When local TV stations showed a sow with cubs playing on a crowded beach in Lake Tahoe there is a problem. I am not a hunter nor an environmentalist. I do feel that to reduce the populations of bears in non hunt communities can be addressed with trapping bears that are in populated areas and inserting IUD contraceptive devices and possibly castrating some males. A better solution than having to put down animals. Once the population is under control this can be slowed or stopped. I think this with the addition of dog hazing that coexistence between the two species will be much better. Thank You Russell Crawford [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**From:** Eric Foster-Moore [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 9:09 PM  
**To:** FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>  
**Cc:** Assemblymember Hadwick  
**Subject:** Fwd: Speak Up May 15: Protect Rural Wildlife Management Rights

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WARNING: This message is from an external source. Verify the sender and exercise caution when clicking links or opening attachments.

Hi,

According to the message below, you are accepting comments on coyote and bear hunting regulations. I'm not sure what exactly is on the table, and honestly I don't have time to read up on it, but in principle, I have a few thoughts:

1. It does seem like there are a lot of bears and coyotes (I live on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe), so some sort of management plan seems warranted.
2. In principle, I am fine with people hunting bears and coyotes in order to control population levels.
3. However, I am not ok with people using dogs to hunt them. It's cruel to the animals to be chased by dogs for long distances and shot in trees. Please do not allow this.

Thank you,  
Eric Foster-Moore

**From:** mettslaketahoe@aol.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 2:17 PM  
**To:** FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** Bear hunting/Coyote "take" rules

I find it appalling that California elected officials - Assemblywoman Hadwick and Senator Dahle - think hunting local wildlife is a viable solution to the increase population of these animals. They are not infringing on our habitat, we are living in theirs.

There must be a more humane solution than terrorizing and hunting bears or taking any number of coyotes at any time. Catch, Spay/Neuter, and Release would reduce the overall numbers and mitigate tragic interactions.

Thank you for your consideration,  
The Metts Family  
South Lake Tahoe, CA

**From:** Lindsey Nieman [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 8:16 PM  
**To:** FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** Wildlife Resources Committee Meeting Public Comment

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WARNING: This message is from an external source. Verify the sender and exercise caution when clicking links or opening attachments.

Wildlife Resources Committee:

I am a resident of District 1, and am a constituent of Assembly Woman Hadwick. I am unable to attend the Wildlife Resources Committee Meeting on Wednesday, May 15th, but I do have a public comment to submit.

As stewards of our environment, it is our responsibility to maintain a healthy ecosystem. With the current political climate, and environmental funds being hamstrung by the sitting administration, it's more important than ever that we pass local laws that are in our best interests, and the best interest of the land that we depend on to survive. As such, I am against any additional hunting permits for bears or coyotes being issued. Like wolves, coyotes and bears play crucial and critical roles in maintaining a strong balance in our environment and are not the threat to livestock, young children, or ranchers that they're made out to be.

I do NOT stand with Assemblywoman Hadwick, Senator Dahle, or anyone else who uses fear as a means to mis-inform the public in an effort to pass unethical legislation, and am against any culling of bears, coyotes, or any other animals who play a critical role in our area.

Lindsey Nieman  
Grass Valley, CA.

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Lindsey Rodni-Nieman

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you." ~ Anne Lamott.



Lost Trail Lodge

[www.losttrailodge.com](http://www.losttrailodge.com)

**From:** Angelique [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 3:47 PM

**To:** FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

**Subject:** Rural Community Wildlife Management Comment

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

WARNING: This message is from an external source. Verify the sender and exercise caution when clicking links or opening attachments.

This email is in regards to the bear hunting and regulatory changes, and Coyote "take" rules, including hunting, depredation, and pest control issues. As an El Dorado, California resident and homeowner, I do **not** support these policies that will harass and harm native wildlife. Black bears and coyotes are imperative members of a healthy ecosystem. Without their presence, the system falls out of balance. Instead, I encourage you to spend these same tax dollars and public service hours towards providing better, more widespread education around cohabitating with wildlife in rural areas.

Killing native wildlife for the comfort and ease of people who choose to live here is not a reasonable response to the inconvenience of having bears eat our trash. Humans are trainable creatures. Bears are smart and can learn. Coyotes are hunters and will target easy prey like household pets given the opportunity. With adequate education and educational resources for residents and visitors, we can learn to live harmoniously with wildlife. Humans must take responsibility for our own actions and impacts. There is a long history of terrible ecologic impacts to removing important predatory and opportunistic species from an ecosystem. Hunting and hazing is not the solution here.

Thank you for your consideration.

Angelique Carl  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**From:** Laury Riggins  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 7:58 PM  
**To:** FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** Black Bear control in Plumas County

Greetings,

I'm a current resident. I have been living in Portola, California for 35 years I have spent at least five days a week in the Lake Davis, CA, area with my dogs, hiking, just five miles away from my home.

I've raised two daughters up here in the woods, teaching them how to respect the outdoors and wildlife here.

With understanding that the unknown can arise, Black Bears in my experience, really don't want to come near humans! My dogs wear bells on their collars, bears run from noise. People can wear the same bells, they're common. The worst case comes when people are "trekking" off trails. They run into mama bear with a cub, mama is mama.

Before extreme dog hounding, and thus hunting for our bear colonies that are native to my backyard community, I urge you to investigate the real problem here. Please do so.

The fact in my community is that I'm not seeing anything different, except for negligent people putting out their garbage cans, the night before pick up.

I'd say the biggest neglect is our IMD disposal contract with our Portola city.

Laurel Riggins