

Staff Summary for October 8-9, 2025

7. Western Burrowing Owl (Consent)**Today's Item****Information** ☐**Action** ☒

Consider approving the Department's request for a six-month extension to deliver the one-year status review report on the petition to list western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) as threatened or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Received petition | March 5, 2024 |
| • Transmitted petition to Department | March 18, 2024 |
| • Published notice of receipt of petition | April 5, 2024 |
| • Determined petitioned action may be warranted, initiating Department's one-year status review | October 9-10, 2024 |
| • Today consider Department's request for six-month extension | October 8-9, 2025 |

Background

On March 5, 2024, the Commission received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Burrowing Owl Preservation Society, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Urban Bird Foundation, Central Valley Bird Club, and San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society requesting the Commission list western burrowing owl as threatened or endangered under CESA.

At its October 2024 meeting, the Commission determined that the petition contains sufficient information to indicate that the petitioned action may be warranted. The Commission published a notice of its determination, and of western burrowing owl's protected, candidate species status, on October 25, 2024. Pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 2074.6, the Department has one year from the date of notice to complete a status review, unless the Commission grants an extension of time.

Today, the Commission will consider a request by the Department for a six-month extension to further analyze and evaluate the available science, to undergo the peer review process, and to complete its status review (Exhibit 1). The Commission must receive the Department's status review report before the Commission can make a final listing decision.

Significant Public Comments

1. The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) supports a six-month extension for the status review of western burrowing owl, suggesting that the delay will allow the Department time to fully analyze the recent survey data commissioned by IID, which the district believes will support the exclusion of local owl populations from any potential CESA listing (Exhibit 2).

Staff Summary for October 8-9, 2025

Recommendation

Commission staff: Under a motion to adopt the consent calendar, approve the Department's request for a six-month extension to complete the status review report for western burrowing owl.

Department: Approve request for a six-month extension to complete the status review report for western burrowing owl.

Exhibits

1. [Department memo, received September 16, 2025](#)
2. [Letter from Tina Anderhold Shields, Water Manager, Imperial Irrigation District, received September 25, 2025](#)

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____, that the Commission adopts the staff recommendations for items 3 through 9 on the consent calendar.

M e m o r a n d u m

Date: September 11, 2025

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

From: Charlton H. Bonham
Director

Subject: Request for 6-Month Extension, Western Burrowing Owl Status Review Report

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) requests a 6-month extension of time pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2074.6 to produce and make publicly available the final peer reviewed western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) status review report. The Department anticipates receiving substantial comments and/or scientific information from tribes, stakeholders, and other interested parties regarding the petition to list the western burrowing owl as threatened or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). The Department has determined that an extension is necessary to complete independent peer review of the status review report and to provide a minimum of 30 days for public review prior to the public hearing specified in Fish and Game Code section 2075.5. The requested extension would change the due date of the Department's status review report to April 25, 2026, which is 18 months from the date the Fish and Game Commission published the Notice of Findings (Cal. Reg. Notice Register 2024, No. 43-Z, p. 1400).

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Scott Gardner, Wildlife Branch Chief at wildlifemgt@wildlife.ca.gov.

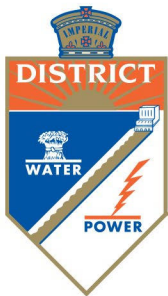
ec: Chad Dibble
Deputy Director
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Scott Gardner
Wildlife Branch Chief

Pete Figura
Environmental Program Manager
Wildlife Branch

Neil Clipperton
Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)
Wildlife Branch

Anne Hilborn
Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)
Wildlife Branch



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September 25, 2025

California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090
fgc@fgc.ca.gov

Subject: Consent Item #7: Western Burrowing Owl

Dear President Zavaleta and Commission Members,

The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) is a public entity organized in 1911 pursuant to the Irrigation District Law (California Water Code sections 20500 et. Seq.). IID is empowered to provide irrigation and energy related services to customers within its district boundaries and, through service contracts, to customers outside of its district boundaries. The IID operates within Imperial and Coachella Valleys, in southeastern California, however its irrigated service area is limited to about 500,000 acres of farmland that extends south of the Salton Sea to the International border with Mexico. Both of these regions include areas also occupied by significant numbers of the Western Burrowing Owl, particularly IID's water service area in Imperial Valley.

With regard to the Fish and Game Commission's October 8-9, 2025 meeting agenda, IID offers its support for the Department of Fish & Wildlife's request for a six-month extension to deliver the one-year status review report on the petition to list the Western Burrowing Owl as a threatened or endangered species under the California Endangered Species Act (consent item 7).

As noted in IID's prior communication dated February 14, 2025 advocating for the Imperial and Coachella Valley Western Burrowing Owl populations to be excluded from any eventual potential CESA listing, IID commissioned extensive burrowing owl population surveys in both the Imperial and Coachella Valleys that were conducted earlier this spring. Those surveys have now been completed, and the consultants are finalizing the technical report to support submission of this data to the Department for consideration in their status review. IID has been in coordination with the Department on a timely delivery of this data, and a six-month extension will ensure the Department has adequate time to fully analyze these more recent survey results.

IID believes that this survey information is critical to the Department's efforts and anticipates it will provide additional technical substantiation for a recommendation to exclude the Imperial and Coachella Valley burrowing owl populations from any listing decision.

Sincerely,

Tina Anderholt Shields, PE
Water Manager