

## Committee Staff Summary for January 13, 2026 WRC

## 5. Department Lands

Today's Item	Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action <input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss recommendations for amendments to regulations regarding Department lands, including wildlife areas and ecological reserves.		

### Summary of Previous/Future Actions

• Today's initial vetting	January 13, 2026; WRC
• Discussion and potential recommendation	May 14, 2026; WRC
• Commission expected to consider WRC recommendations	June 17-18, 2026

### Background

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, including wildlife areas and ecological reserves. As needed or requested, the Commission considers regulatory amendments that govern various public activities on Department lands, such as hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, and horseback riding. Regulations for Department lands were last amended in 2024.

Today, the Department will present an overview of its recommendations for amendments to Department lands regulations (Exhibit 1). WRC will discuss the Department's recommendations in preparation for the May 2026 WRC meeting, where a potential WRC recommendation may be developed for Commission consideration to proceed with a rulemaking.

### Significant Public Comments (N/A)

### Recommendation (N/A)

### Exhibits

1. [Department presentation](#)

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



# Department Lands Regulations

*Presentation to the Commission Wildlife Resources Committee*

January 13, 2026

**PRESENTED BY: KRISTI CRIPE, STATEWIDE ECOLOGICAL RESERVE COORDINATOR**

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

# DEPARTMENT LANDS REGULATIONS 2026

General Visitor  
Regulations

Property Specific  
Regulations

Lands Pass Program  
Updates

New Designations





DESIGNATE  
TWO NEW  
WILDLIFE AREAS

Big Springs Ranch  
Department Region 1  
Siskiyou County

Sheep Ranch  
Department Region 2  
Calaveras County



# LANDS PASS PROGRAM

Began in 1980's with 7 properties.

Legislature directed Department to develop more income for land management from user fees by expanding Lands Pass Program.

Program was expanded to 43 properties.



# LANDS PASS

Remove properties within California Coastal Zone (CC) / State Lands Commission (SLC) leases

Properties managed by U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

California Fish and Game Commission (CFGC) regulation change petition

15 properties

Region	Property Description	Reason
1	Crescent City Marsh Wildlife Area	CC
1	Eel River Wildlife Area	SLC / CC
1	Elk Creek Wetlands Wildlife Area	CC
1	Elk River Wildlife Area	CC
1	Fay Slough Wildlife Area	CC
1	Lake Earl Wildlife Area	SLC / CC
1	Mad River Slough Wildlife Area	CC
1	South Spit Wildlife Area	BLM/CC
2	Hope Valley Wildlife Area – Petition to CFGC	2018-016
3	Cache Creek Wildlife Area	BLM
5	Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve	SLC / CC
5	Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve	SLC / CC
5	Buena Vista Lagoon Ecological Reserve	CC
5	San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve	SLC / CC
5	Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve	SLC / CC

# REINSTATE LANDS PASS PROPERTIES

Reinstate 8 properties

## Suspended Properties Where No State Lands Commission Lease Occurs

- Honey Lake Wildlife Area
- Tehama Wildlife Area
- Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area
- North Grasslands Wildlife Area
- Mendota Wildlife Area

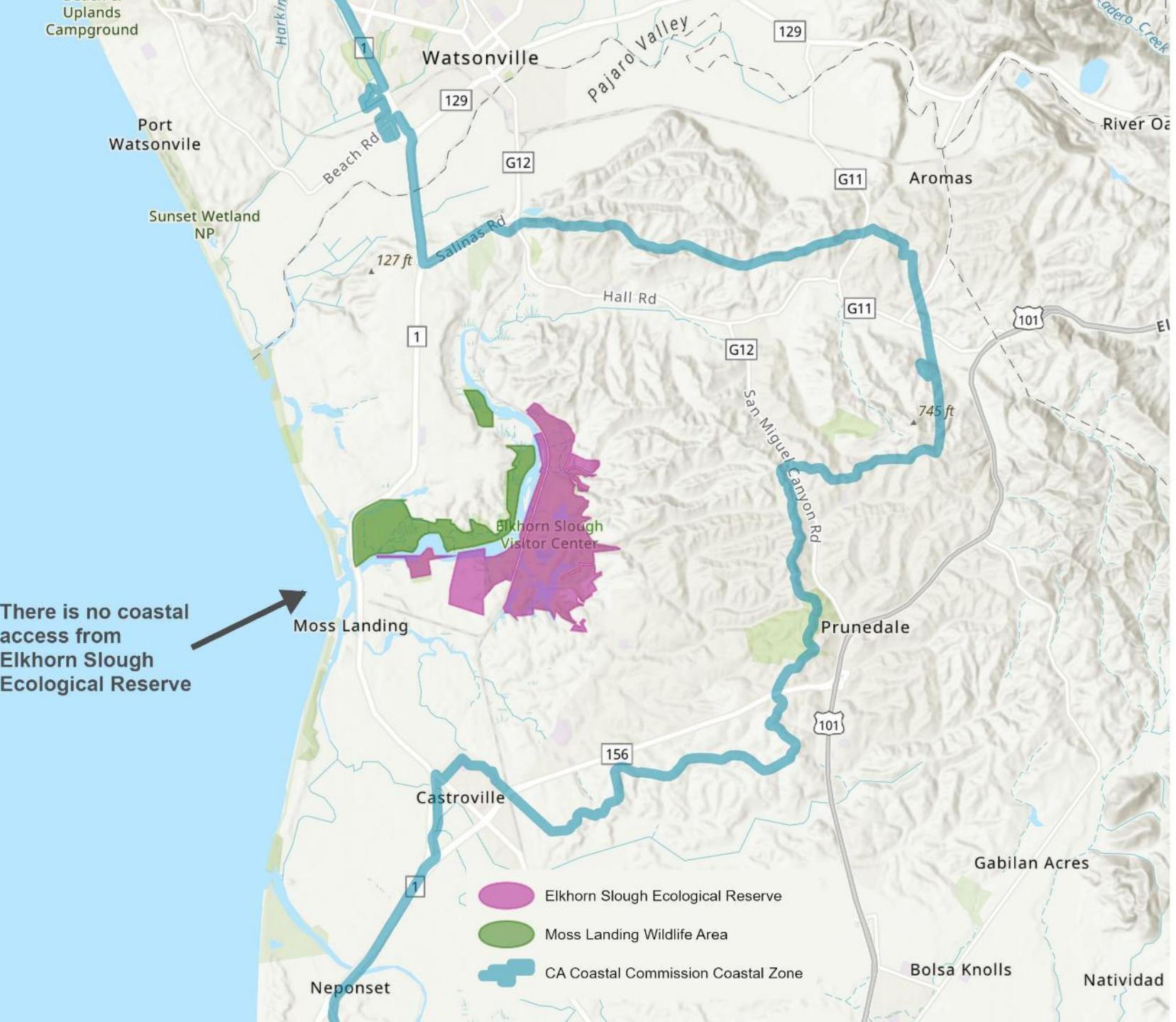
## State Lands Commission Leases Not Located on Units that Require Lands Pass

- Grizzly Island Wildlife Area (excluding Crescent Unit)
- Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area (Green Island Unit only)
- Imperial Wildlife Area (Wister and Finney-Ramer units only)



# REINSTATE LANDS PASS

Elkhorn Slough Ecological Reserve is located within Coastal Zone; however, no coastal access.



# Title 14 Sections 550, 550.5

## General Regulations and Special Use Permit

### General Regulations for Public Use and Reservations, Entry Permits, Fees, Passes and Special Use Permits

- Clarify ejections and penalties for hunters
- Clarify where target shooting is prohibited or allowed
- Prohibit use of trail cameras on wildlife areas and ecological reserves (NEW)
- Add term “facility” to clarify vacancy draw process – entry passes for hunting may be issued at hunter check-stations, not only Department offices
- Update special use permit application (DFW730) contact information and remove fee amount



# Title 14 Subsection 550(cc)



## Clarify Where Target Shooting Prohibited or Allowed (highlighted text to be added)

**(cc) Non hunting uses of Firearms, Archery, and Other Propulsive Equipment:** Except at designated shooting sites listed in 551(v) and 630(j) or with a special permit, possession in the field and use of firearms and archery equipment is permitted only for the purpose of hunting on all wildlife areas and on national wildlife refuges listed in Section 552.

**(2)** Possession, discharge, and use of firearms or archery equipment is prohibited on department lands except within department-designated hunting areas for hunting purposes, or designated shooting sites, or with a permit issued by the department, or as authorized for dog training in a designated area, or when fishing with bow and arrow tackle as defined in subsection 550(b)(11) and allowed in subsection 550(h).

**(3)(B)** Target Shooting is prohibited on all Department lands except at designated shooting sites. See 551(v) for list of Wildlife Areas with designated shooting areas. Designated shooting sites are open daily from sunrise to sunset unless otherwise listed in subsections 551(v) or 630(j) of these regulations.



# Title 14 Section 551



## Additional Visitor Use Regulations on Department Lands Designated as Wildlife Areas

### **Dog Training**

- Napa-Sonoma Marshes WA dog training on Ringstrom Bay Unit only

### **Bicycles**

- Napa-Sonoma Marshes WA allow hunters to use bicycles on Pond 1 and 1A during waterfowl season – Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday only

### **Boat and/or Horse and Pack Stock**

- Volta WA prohibit horses
- Gray Lodge WA prohibit boats

### **Wildlife Areas with Camping**

- Gray Lodge WA allow camping the night before hunt day



# Title 14 Section 551 (continued)



## Additional Visitor Use Regulations on Department Lands Designated as Wildlife Areas (continued)

### **Designated Closures & Restrictions**

- Shasta Valley WA Trout Lake & Bass Lake fishing closure during waterfowl season

### **Additional Hunter Opportunities on Type A and Type B**

- Gray Lodge WA fall turkey season allowed on waterfowl shoot days – spring turkey season allowed only through special drawing
- Yolo Bypass WA mentored apprentice deer and turkey hunts

### **Additional Waterfowl Reservation Regulations**

- Gray Lodge WA & Yolo Bypass WA: Up to three persons



# Title 14 Section 552



## Public Use Regulations for National Wildlife Refuges Also Designated as Wildlife Areas

- San Luis National Wildlife Refuge: Create consistency with other refuge regulations. “It shall be unlawful to retain an entry permit or remain on the wildlife refuge later than one- and one-half hours after sunset, unless participating in overnight stay in accordance with subsection (a)(7)(E).”
- Organize 552 (a)(1-9) to present topics in same order across refuge properties.



Title 14  
Section 630

## Additional Visitor Use Regulations on Department Lands Designated as Ecological Reserves

### Ecological Reserves with Hunting as Designated Public Use:

- Boden Canyon Ecological Reserve – Allow hunting for consistency with adjacent national forest land
- Eden Landing Ecological Reserve – Hunters may only have 25 shotgun shells in possession while in the field





THANK YOU!  
QUESTIONS?

Kristi Cripe  
Statewide Ecological  
Reserve Coordinator

[LandsProgram@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:LandsProgram@wildlife.ca.gov)