

Staff Summary for February 11-12, 2026

11B. Department Director and Law Enforcement Division Reports

Today's Item

Information ☒

Action ☐

The Department will highlight items of note since the last Commission meeting.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)

Background (N/A)

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation (N/A)

Exhibits

1. [Governor Gavin Newsom's news release announcing appointment of Meghan Hertel as director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, dated January 29, 2026](#)
2. [The Nature Conservancy's news release announcing Chuck Bonham as its California executive director, dated December 8, 2025](#)

Motion (N/A)



GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, January 29, 2026

Governor's Press Office: (916) 445-4571

Governor Newsom announces appointments

SACRAMENTO – Governor Gavin Newsom today announced the following appointments:

Meghan Hertel, of Sacramento, has been appointed Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Hertel has been the Deputy Secretary of Biodiversity and Habitat at the California Natural Resources Agency since 2024. She was the North American Director of the Land Life Company from 2022 to 2024. Hertel held several positions at Audubon California from 2010 to 2022, including Director of Land and Water Conservation, Interim State Co-Director, Director of Working Lands, Associate Director of Public Policy, and San Joaquin River Project Manager. She was a Conservation Program Administrator at the Resources Legacy Fund from 2007 to 2010. Hertel earned a Master of Arts degree in Environmental Science and Policy from Clark University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Florida. This position requires Senate confirmation and the compensation is \$218,268. Hertel is a Democrat.

Press Release from The Nature Conservancy Announcing Selection of Chuck Bonham as Executive Director of its California Business Unit.

December 8, 2025



The Nature Conservancy (TNC) today announced the selection of Charlton “Chuck” Bonham as Executive Director of its California business unit, effective January 26, 2026. Bonham steps into one of the organization’s most strategically important leadership roles as escalating climate change and biodiversity loss reshape California and global regions.

“Chuck Bonham is an exceptional conservation leader,” said CEO of The Nature Conservancy Jennifer Morris. “His steadfast commitment to the people and nature of California, his vision for protecting biodiversity and his proven ability to guide complex organizations through intricate challenges will be instrumental in advancing TNC’s mission. California’s role in achieving TNC’s goals is pivotal, and Chuck will help us act with urgency to create a future where people and nature thrive.”

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[Jennifer Morris](#), CEO, The Nature Conservancy

As California Executive Director, Bonham will lead TNC’s work across California. Home to remarkable ecological diversity, California is a global force in driving conservation through bold investment, cutting-edge innovation and forward-looking policy that bolster TNC’s statewide work and shape environmental solutions globally. The Nature Conservancy’s California chapter embraces the extraordinary platform the state provides to deliver meaningful, lasting outcomes for people and nature. It serves as a pace-setter for conservation, operating as a center of innovation with influence that extends far beyond the Golden State.

“Chuck led Fish and Wildlife with heart and conviction—the longest-serving director in its 150-year history and a champion for California’s natural heritage,” said Governor Gavin Newsom. “From his leadership restoring the Klamath to bringing salmon back to long-lost habitats, his belief that nature can rebound has shaped our state. I’m grateful for his service and counsel, and I look forward to continuing to work with him at The Nature Conservancy.”

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Governor Gavin Newsom

In welcoming Bonham, TNC California’s leadership and Board of Trustees reaffirm their commitment to continuity and strong momentum across California, where TNC has protected and restored over one million acres of land, as well as rivers, streams and coastal and ocean habitats since 1959.

An Established Leader of Progress

Bonham joins TNC after serving as Director of California’s Department of Fish and Wildlife, the nation’s oldest and largest state and wildlife agency, with a budget of approximately \$1 billion and over 3,000 employees. Appointed by Governor Jerry Brown in 2011 and reappointed by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2019, Bonham is the longest-serving director in the Department’s history. His tenure spanned regulatory and permitting responsibilities that shaped California’s future in transportation, housing, water, energy and major infrastructure.

“Now Chuck will bring his passion and renowned effectiveness to The Nature Conservancy, which is already transforming how we protect and restore our environment across California and the world. I’m beyond excited to see what TNC California will accomplish under Chuck’s leadership.”

Wade Crowfoot
California Natural Resources Secretary

“Chuck has been a visionary, creative and steadfast leader of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife over the last almost 15 years,” said California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot. “His commitment to California nature in this role and over his career is simply unparalleled. Now Chuck will bring his passion and renowned effectiveness to The Nature Conservancy, which is already transforming how we protect and restore our environment across California and the world. I’m beyond excited to see what TNC California will accomplish under Chuck’s leadership.”

During nearly 15 years of public service, Bonham led landmark conservation achievements, including the largest dam removal and river restoration project in U.S. history on the Klamath River, expanded commitments to Tribal Nations and the establishment and stewardship of the world’s largest network of Marine Protected Areas. He also oversaw management of ocean fisheries along California’s 1,100-mile

coastline, nearly 750 wildlife refuges and ecological reserves over 1 million total acres and a law enforcement division of roughly 500 wildlife officers.

Before his state leadership role, Bonham was the California Director and a senior attorney at Trout Unlimited. He has also served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal and worked as an outdoor educator and guide. Originally from Atlanta, Georgia, he earned his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Georgia and his law degree from Northwestern School of Law of Lewis & Clark College. Bonham is proud to call California home and spends as much time as he can exploring the state's wild landscapes.

Choosing TNC's Next California Executive Director

The Nature Conservancy conducted a rigorous and far-reaching search to identify its next California Executive Director, which drew significant interest. The final selection involved multiple rounds of interviews with organizational and board leaders. This collaborative and thorough process ensured that the chosen leader reflects the experience, vision and values essential for guiding TNC's critical work in California.

Bonham will succeed Interim California Executive Director Scott Morrison, who will continue to serve in a vital leadership capacity at TNC.

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