

Staff Summary for June 17-18, 2026

Executive Session**Today's Item**Information Action

Executive session includes four standing topics:

- (A) Pending litigation to which the Commission is a party
- (B) Possible litigation involving the Commission
- (C) Staffing
- (D) Deliberation and action on license and permit items

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)**Background**

During the public portion of its meeting, the Commission will call a recess and reconvene in a closed session pursuant to the authority of California Government Code Section 11126, subdivisions (a), (c)(3) and (e)(1). The Commission will address four items in closed session: Pending litigation, possible litigation, staffing, and license and permit items.

(A) Pending Litigation to Which the Commission is a Party

See agenda for a complete list of pending civil litigation to which the Commission is a party, at the time the agenda was made public. At any meeting, during executive session, the Commission may take action related to pending litigation.

(B) Possible Litigation Involving the Commission**(C) Staffing**

For details about staffing, generally, see the executive director's report under Agenda Item 4(A) for today's meeting.

The Commission is authorized to employ an executive director pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 104. The Commission may choose to conduct a performance evaluation of the executive director or discuss the process for such a performance evaluation. Melissa Miller-Henson is the Commission's current executive director; the Commission appointed her in September 2019.

(D) Deliberation and Action on License and Permit Items

- I. Consider the proposed decision in FGC Case No. 25ALJ40-FGC, regarding revocation of Gregory Dudley's hunting license.

The Department filed an accusation with the Commission on December 24, 2025; the accusation requests the Commission revoke Gregory Dudley's (Respondent) hunting license. Respondent filed a notice of defense with the Commission requesting a hearing.

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Commission staff referred this case to the California Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) and OAH conducted a hearing. After the hearing, OAH submitted a proposed decision (Exhibit 1) to the Commission. The proposed decision finds that the Department proved that the Respondent was convicted of unlawful take of a deer and that Respondent committed the offense knowingly and intentionally. The proposed decision also finds that Respondent did not present any evidence of rehabilitation and revoking Respondent's license is necessary.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)**Recommendation**

Commission staff: Adopt the proposed decision in FGC Case No. 25ALJ40-FGC

Exhibits

1. [Proposed decision regarding FGC Case No. 25ALJ40-FGC](#)

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission adopts the proposed decision regarding FGC Case No. 25ALJ40-FGC as its decision in the matter.

**BEFORE THE
FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

GREGORY KARL DUDLEY, Respondent

OAH No. 2026021109

PROPOSED DECISION

Christopher W. Dietrich, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ), Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), State of California, heard this matter on May 11, 2026, by videoconference from Sacramento, California.

Cooper Wilce, Staff Counsel, represented complainant Nathaniel Arnold, Acting Chief of the Law Enforcement Division for the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department).

Matthew Clinton Smith, Attorney at Law, represented respondent Gregory Karl Dudley, who was present.

Evidence was received and the record held open for complainant to submit additional documentary evidence. Complainant's additional evidence was marked as Exhibits 15 through 17. Exhibit 15 was admitted for jurisdictional purposes. Exhibits 16 and 17 were admitted by official notice. The record was closed and the matter submitted for decision on May 11, 2026.

FACTUAL FINDINGS

Jurisdictional Matters

1. The Department prepares and issues all licenses, permits, tags, reservations, and other entitlements authorized by the Fish and Game Code. (Fish & G. Code, § 1050, subd. (a).) On May 24, 2023, the Department renewed a Hunting License (license) issued to respondent.

2. On November 3, 2025, complainant, acting solely in his official capacity, signed and thereafter filed an Accusation seeking to revoke respondent's license. The Accusation alleges cause to revoke the license for using a boat to circle and drown a deer, criminal charges related to this incident, and a criminal conviction for violating the Fish and Game Code.

3. Respondent timely filed a Notice of Defense to the Accusation. The matter was set for an evidentiary hearing before an ALJ of the OAH, an independent adjudicative agency of the State of California, pursuant to Government Code section 11500 et seq. The hearing was conducted consistent with the procedures set forth in California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 746.

Department Investigation

4. Sean Pirtle is a now retired Department Warden. He was a Warden with the Department for 28 years before his retirement. He is familiar with deer hunting from his work as a Warden and his 40 years of personal hunting experience. On August 20, 2023, while employed at the Department, he investigated an allegation that respondent took a deer in an unlawful manner. He prepared a written report regarding his investigation and testified at hearing consistent with his report.

5. On August 20, 2023, the Department received a tip call from HS.¹ Department Warden Isaac Farley took the call. HS stated that the day prior she was with respondent and his girlfriend, BB, on the Feather River near Gridley, California. The parties observed a buck deer attempting to swim across the river. Respondent drove his boat to the deer, drowned the deer, and subsequently claimed he killed the deer with a bow.

6. Warden Farley and another warden interviewed respondent and BB, who both denied drowning the deer. Warden Farley inspected respondent's deer tag and observed that respondent did not get the deer tag countersigned and had not properly punched out the notches for the month and day of the kill on the tag as required by the Fish and Game Code. Warden Farley cited respondent for not getting the tag countersigned but did not seize the deer or the tag. Warden Pirtle advised Warden Farley that further investigation of the allegations was warranted.

HS'S STATEMENT

7. On August 20, 2023, Wardens Pirtle and Farley contacted HS by telephone to reinterview her regarding her allegations. She relayed that she went boating with respondent and BB on August 19, 2023. Respondent had recently purchased a new boat, which is the boat they initially rode in. At approximately 3:30 p.m. they launched the boat from the Gridley Boat Launch in Gridley. At one point, BB asked respondent if he had brought his bow. HS could not remember respondent's

¹ The reporting party and third-party witnesses are referred to by their initials to protect their privacy.

answer but “felt like he said no.” HS did not see a bow in respondent’s possession at any time during the outing.

8. The parties boated to an island on the river. Respondent and BB were sitting on the boat while HS was talking to them from the side of the boat. Respondent and BB’s dogs were running around on the island. BB pointed out a buck deer swimming across the river. Respondent and BB became excited about the buck because they could fill their deer tag for the year. Warden Pirtle explained that August 19, 2023, was the first day of archery deer hunting season. BB asked respondent what he was going to do or if he brought his bow. Respondent answered that he did not have his bow and was going to drown the deer.

9. While HS was still on the island, respondent and BB quickly pulled up the boat’s side anchor. Respondent drove the boat towards the deer and proceeded to drive swift turns around the deer. HS turned away and started crying. She heard the boat continue to circle in the river. She turned back and observed the panicked deer swimming in the river as respondent circled the boat around it. The deer appeared to be tired.

10. The boat eventually stopped. BB came back to the island. Respondent restarted the boat and drove off towards the boat ramp. BB told HS that respondent was leaving to get his deer tag. Respondent returned one to two hours later with a different “older” boat. HS and BB got on the boat. Respondent dropped HS and BB at the boat ramp and then drove the boat upriver towards the location of the deer. HS left the river with BB and returned to her home.

RESPONDENT'S STATEMENT

11. Wardens Pirtle and Farley spoke to respondent at his residence on August 20, 2023. Respondent relayed that on the day prior his Prodigy boat overheated so he left BB and HS at the river while he went to get another boat. Respondent came back with his "little boat," and his dog ran a deer into the river near their location. Respondent denied following the deer with his boat. Rather, he stated he shot the deer with a bow from the shore. The deer was 30 yards away and was swimming in water that was approximately eight feet deep when it was struck. The arrow struck the deer in the ribs, passing halfway through its body.

12. Respondent entered his boat and drove into the river to retrieve the deer and bring it to shore. The deer eventually died. HS was distraught over the dead deer, so respondent left the deer on the shore and drove BB and HS back to the boat ramp. He then returned to the shore and gutted the deer.

BB'S STATEMENT

13. Warden Pirtle interviewed BB at her and respondent's residence on August 20, 2023. The day prior, she, respondent, and HS went to the river. Respondent's boat kept overheating so he decided to go get his older Klamath boat, leaving BB and HS at the river. BB showed Warden Pirtle the Klamath boat which was parked on her and respondent's driveway.

14. Respondent returned with his other boat. BB saw a deer as she was sitting by the river. Her dogs started chasing the deer. She and respondent got into the boat and drove toward the deer. Respondent shot the deer from the boat using his bow from 30 yards away. The deer was running in shallow water near the river bank when it was shot.

15. The deer went deeper into the water after it was shot. Respondent circled the deer, grabbed ahold of it, and dragged it toward the river bank. BB stated HS was "not even around" when the deer was killed. BB told respondent that she needed to take HS home because she was "freaking out." Respondent, HS, and BB left for the boat ramp. BB drove HS home and then returned to the river to pick up respondent and the deer.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

16. Respondent showed Warden Pirtle the deer's antlers and meat. Warden Pirtle testified that the deer was unusually large for the region and would be considered a trophy deer. Respondent further presented the bow and arrow he claimed he used to kill the deer. Warden Pirtle observed hair on the broadhead of the arrow.

17. Respondent showed Warden Pirtle a picture of the deer's ribcage. The photograph shows a clean arrow hole between both sides of the deer's ribs. There was no blood shot tissue on either hole. Warden Pirtle testified that he has examined thousands of wounds and is familiar with arrow wounds. Based upon his experience, he concluded that the arrow was pushed through the deer after it was dead. The absence of blood shot tissue indicated to him that the deer's heart stopped beating before it was shot. However, he acknowledged that the absence of blood could be explained by the animal being cleaned after it was killed. Further, the holes on both sides of the deer's ribcages indicated that the arrow passed completely through the deer, contrary to respondent's representations that the arrow only went halfway through the deer.

18. Warden Pirtle did not believe respondent's account of how the deer was killed. Based upon respondent's description, the deer's ribs would have been fully submerged under water when it was shot. He found it improbable that respondent could strike and kill a deer with a bow and arrow when its chest was underwater. Based upon his experience, when an arrow hits water it will lose power and change trajectory.

ARREST

19. Warden Pirtle arrested respondent and transported him to the Butte County Jail for (1) maliciously torturing and drowning a deer; (2) failing to immediately tag a deer; (3) unlawfully taking a deer with a motorized boat; (4) unlawfully taking and possessing a deer; and (5) intentionally torturing a deer outside of lawful hunting methods. Warden Pirtle seized respondent's bow, two arrows, and deer tag. He also seized the deer's antlers and meat.

BOAT RAMP KEYCARD DATA AND VIDEOS

20. Warden Farley obtained Gridley Boat Ramp keycard entry data and camera footage from the City of Gridley. Respondent's access keycard was used to enter the boat ramp at 3:41 p.m. on August 19, 2023. Warden Pirtle viewed the footage which showed a GMC truck towing a Prodigy boat entering the boat ramp at 3:50 p.m. A person matching respondent's appearance was driving the truck. The boat's interior was visible in the camera footage. No bow was visible inside the boat. The truck and boat departed the boat ramp area at 5:03 p.m. No bow was visible in the boat when it departed the boat ramp.

21. At 5:28 p.m., a silver Dodge truck entered the boat ramp area using respondent's keycard. The truck was towing a Klamath boat. Warden Pirtle recognized the Klamath boat from respondent and BB's driveway. The truck left the boat ramp

towing an empty trailer at 5:57 p.m. The truck's driver was not visible in the camera footage.

22. At 6:24 p.m., the silver Dodge truck reentered the boat ramp area towing an empty boat trailer. The driver matched BB's appearance.

23. At 6:32 p.m., the silver Dodge truck exited the boat ramp towing a boat. A dead buck deer is visible inside the boat. The bow that Warden Pirtle seized from respondent is visible in the front platform of the boat.

Criminal Charges and Conviction

24. On March 27, 2024, in the Superior Court of California, County of Butte, Case No. 24CF01490, the Butte County District Attorney's office charged respondent with violating (1) Penal Code section 597, subdivision (a), malicious torture of an animal; (2) Penal Code section 115, subdivision (a), filing a false or forged instrument with the state; and (3) Fish and Game Code section 2000, subdivision (a), unlawful taking of wildlife. On September 18, 2024, respondent was convicted by plea of nolo contendere of violating Fish and Game Code section 2000, subdivision (a), a misdemeanor. The remaining charges were dismissed. Respondent was sentenced to one year of probation, during which he was ordered not to hunt. He was further ordered to forfeit his Prodigy boat and trailer to the Department.

Respondent's Evidence

25. Respondent did not testify at hearing. He did not call any witnesses and did not present any documentary evidence.

Analysis

26. The undisputed evidence established that respondent was convicted of unlawfully taking wildlife in violation of Fish and Game Code section 2000, subdivision (a). Warden Pirtle interviewed three witnesses who presented differing accounts regarding how respondent killed a deer on August 19, 2023. Respondent's and BB's accounts were not credible. The physical evidence established that, more likely than not, respondent drowned the deer using his boat and then shot or inserted an arrow into the deer after it died. The evidence established that respondent engaged in this conduct knowingly and intentionally.

27. The objective of an administrative licensing proceeding is to protect the public. Such proceedings are not for the primary purpose of punishment. (See *Fahmy v. Medical Bd. of Cal.* (1995) 38 Cal.App.4th 810, 817.) The circumstances underlying respondent's conviction are egregious. Respondent utilized his boat to circle and drown a buck deer. This inhumane and unlawful conduct caused needless suffering to the deer and demonstrates a callous disregard for the welfare of wildlife. Respondent presented no evidence. As such, he did not demonstrate any rehabilitation or otherwise indicate that he will avoid similar misconduct in the future. In the absence of any evidence of rehabilitation, respondent's license must be revoked to protect California's wildlife and the public.

LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Complainant bears the burden of proving that there is cause to discipline respondent's license by a preponderance of the evidence. (Evid. Code, § 115; *Imports Performance v. Department of Consumer Affairs, Bureau of Automotive Repair* (2011)

201 Cal.App.4th 911, 916-918.) If complainant meets this burden, respondent has the burden of establishing rehabilitation by a preponderance of the evidence. (*Whetstone v. Bd. of Dental Examiners* (1927) 87 Cal.App. 156, 164.) Preponderance of the evidence means, "more likely than not." (*Sandoval v. Bank of America* (2002) 94 Cal.App.4th 1378, 1388.)

Cause for Discipline

2. California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 745.5, subdivision (a) provides:

The commission may suspend or revoke a person's hunting or sport fishing license or permit privileges, provided that:

(1) in a court of law the person is convicted of a violation of any provision of the Fish and Game Code; any provision of these regulations; or any other provision of law intended to protect fish and wildlife of the State of California; and

(2) the commission complies with the procedures set forth in Section 746 of these regulations,

(3) the hearing officer determines the person committed the offense intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly.

3. The undisputed evidence established that respondent was convicted of unlawfully taking wildlife in violation of Fish and Game Code section 2000, subdivision (a). The evidence further established that respondent committed this offense knowingly and intentionally. This hearing was conducted consistent with California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 746. Therefore, complainant has established

cause to discipline respondent's license pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 745.5, subdivision (a)(1).

4. Complainant did not establish cause to discipline respondent's license based upon the fact that he was charged with, but not convicted of, violating Penal Code sections 597, subdivision (a) and 115, subdivision (a). California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 745.5, subdivision (a)(1) only permits the Fish and Game Commission to suspend or revoke a Hunting License based upon applicable criminal convictions, not criminal charges.

Conclusion

5. Respondent was convicted of committing an egregious violation of the Fish and Game Code. He presented no evidence of rehabilitation to demonstrate that he can safely hold a Hunting License. Consequently, revoking his license is necessary to protect California's wildlife and the public interest.

ORDER

Respondent Gregory Karl Dudley's Hunting License is REVOKED.

DATE: May 21, 2026

Christopher W. Dietrich

Christopher W. Dietrich (May 21, 2026 15:04:06 PDT)

CHRISTOPHER W. DIETRICH

Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings