

Committee Staff Summary for September 10, 2026 WRC

2. Private Lands Management Program**Today's Item**Information ☐Action ☒

Receive and discuss Department recommended regulatory amendments, and develop potential recommendation related to private lands wildlife habitat enhancement and management licenses and plans.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Initial vetting May 14, 2026; WRC
- **Today's discussion and potential recommendation** **September 10, 2026; WRC**
- Present recommendations to the Commission October 13-16, 2026

Background

The Private Lands Management (PLM) Program, administered by the Department, encourages private property owners within California to develop and implement wildlife habitat enhancement and management plans that actively encourage the propagation, conservation and wise use of the fish and wildlife species on their property, as well as to protect and enhance wildlife habitat.

Pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 3400 et seq, and California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 601, applicants develop a management plan that is reviewed and approved by the Department, after which the Commission may approve the plan and grant a license for a period of five years. Each licensee is required to submit an annual report to the Department documenting that various requirements have been met, after which the Department provides the Commission with a recommendation for each license and whether it should be continued.

Currently, the PLM Program protects over one-million acres of habitat statewide.

Updates

On August 19, 2026, the Department held a meeting with PLM licensees and stakeholders to discuss the Department's recommendations to the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC). The meeting was well attended and there was robust discussion of several of the Department's ideas for regulatory amendments. Concerns expressed included the ability for a hunter to obtain more than one PLM tag, and donating tags for limited, controlled public access to PLM lands.

Today's Meeting

Today, the Department will present additional details about its stakeholder meeting (Exhibit 1), and WRC will continue discussion regarding several concepts for amendments to the regulations governing the PLM Program. WRC may develop a recommendation for Commission consideration.

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Significant Public Comments

A PLM operator from Monterey County extolls the PLM Program, agrees that the Department needs access to PLM properties and that the PLM Program should foster more access to hunting opportunities for the public. He disagrees that PLM hunters should be limited to one tag because it may discourage hunters from spending money in California. (Exhibit 2)

Recommendation

Commission staff: Recommend the Commission support a future rulemaking regarding the PLM Program, based on today's discussion.

Department: Support a future rulemaking regarding the PLM Program, as recommended.

Exhibits

1. [Department presentation](#)
2. [Email from Doug Roth](#), received August 24, 2026

Committee Direction/Recommendation

The Wildlife Resources Committee recommends that the Commission support a future rulemaking regarding the PLM Program, based on the Department's recommendation and today's discussion.

PRIVATE LAND MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS



*Presented to the
Wildlife Resources Committee of the
California Fish and Game Commission
September 10, 2026*

PRESENTED BY: VICTORIA BARR

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

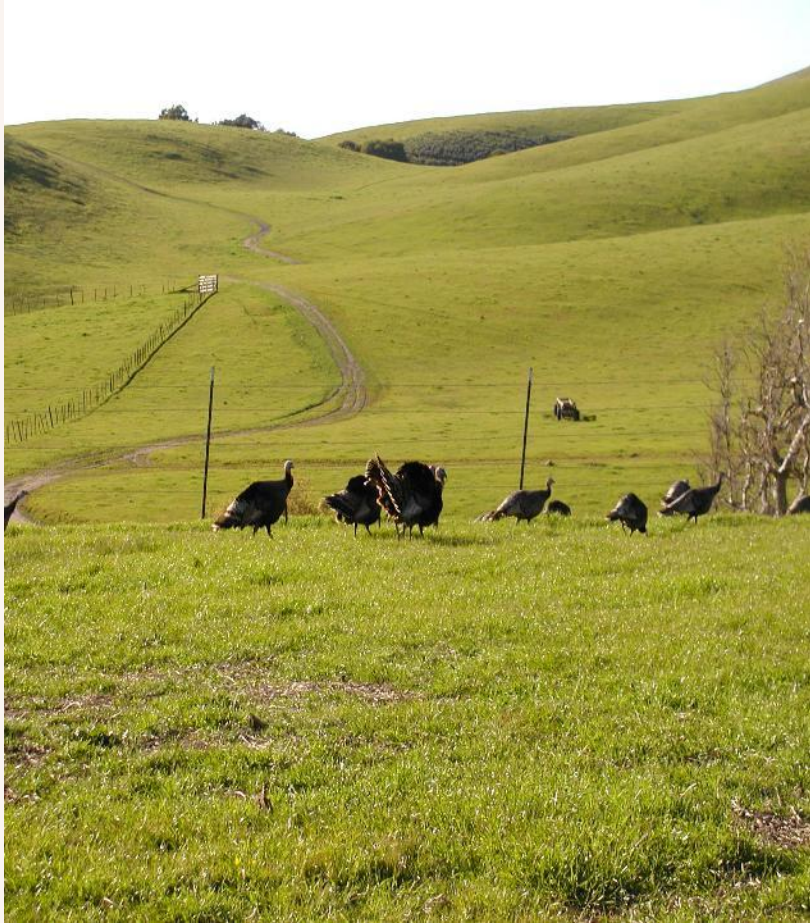
PLM Stakeholder Meeting



Guzzler at 360 Ranch

- August 19, 2026
 - West Sacramento Department office
 - Remote option via Zoom
- 10 PLM operators or representatives in person attendance
- 47 operators and department staff on Zoom
- Emailed comments
- August 24, 2026
 - Followed up with regional staff on feedback received by regional PLM coordinators

Broadly Supported Concepts



Wild turkey at Bardin Ranch

- Department access
- Disease testing
- Regulation clean-up
- Removal from the program
 - Leniency for minor or first-time late reporting
 - Differentiate between non-renewal and removal from program within the license term
 - Make it progressive
 - Warnings - correction window - action
 - Transparency in criteria for removal

Limited Controlled Public Access - Findings



Bardin Ranch.

- Operator Concerns
 - Safety concerns on remote, rugged, gated, and steep unpaved road properties
 - Fire liability, insurance challenges, and general legal exposure
 - Some operators said they would leave program if limited public access becomes mandatory
 - This requirement infringes on private property rights
- Many operators currently donate PLM tags or provide access for non-PLM species!

Limited Controlled Public Access - Options



- Appreciative of the amount of public interaction that already exists in the PLM program
 - Department will work with operators to gather and document this information and include it in the tables delivered to the Commission in the future
- Neutral on if changes are needed currently
- If desire is to move forward, recommend the following based on public feedback

Limited Controlled Public Access - Options



Requirement to provide opportunities that support R3 and hunting heritage efforts

- Could apply to PLMs with >5 tags for any species

Opportunities could include:

- Donate at least one hunting opportunity on the PLM to a local organization, NGO, youth group, women's hunt group, etc.
- Donate at least one tag to the SHARE Program
- Conduct public hunting courses, clinics, or workshops on property
- Provide mentorship hunting opportunities

Phase this in to be effective for new PLMs and/or upon 5-year renewal

1 Elk Tag Eligibility



- Concerns Raised
 - A few outfitters and landowners rely on selling multi-elk or multi-species packages to a single hunter, especially international clients
 - Restricting hunters to one elk could:
 - Reduce revenue needed for habitat projects
 - Undermine economic feasibility of PLM participation
 - Tags would not become available to general public
 - PLM is a private program and should not be bound by general public draw rules

A group of bull elk at Indian Valley Cattle Company.

Instances of Multiple PLM Elk Tag Harvest

2021

- 7 hunters purchased 2 PLM elk tags

2022

- 2 hunters purchased 2 PLM elk tags
- 1 hunter purchased 3 PLM elk tags

2023

- 7 hunters purchased 2 PLM elk tags

2024

- 10 hunters purchased 2 PLM elk tags
- 1 hunter purchased 3 PLM elk tags

2025

- 5 hunters purchased 2 PLM elk tags
- 1 hunter purchased 6 PLM elk tags

1 Elk Tag Eligibility - Options



- Appreciative of the feedback regarding impacts to existing PLM operations
- Neutral on if changes are needed currently, but do support ensuring we provide as many opportunities as we can for the most hunters
- If desire is to move forward, recommend the following based on public feedback
 - Set higher elk tag/per person threshold (e.g., 2 or 3)
 - Phase in tag requirement to protect existing 5-year management plans

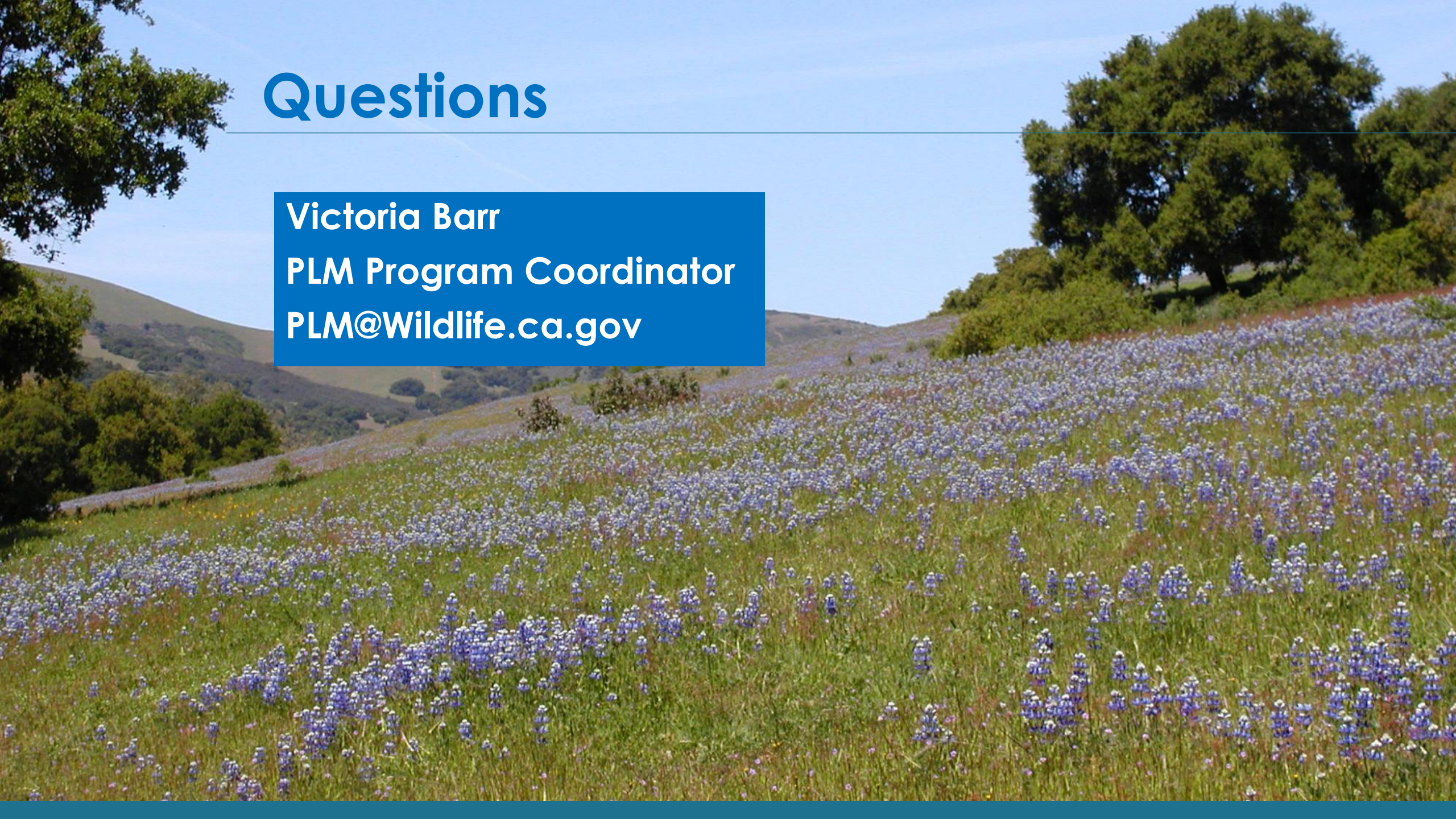
A group of bull elk at Indian Valley Cattle Company.

Questions

Victoria Barr

PLM Program Coordinator

PLM@Wildlife.ca.gov



From: Doug Roth [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2026 11:15 AM
To: Barr, Victoria@Wildlife [REDACTED]; FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
Subject: PLM proposed regulations

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

My thoughts on proposed plm regulations. Wildlife and I thank you for what you do

Sent from my iPad

PLM thoughts

Vivian, thank you for your email. I operate Roth and San Bartolome PLM in southern Monterey County. I think there was some useful dialogue at the stakeholders meeting in Sacramento, and I wanted to share my thoughts ahead of the September 10 meeting.

The PLM program is an excellent program if implemented correctly and not abused. We as landowners and the Department need to work together; we're on the same team. If we do, all wildlife wins.

I am in agreement that our biologists need access to property to conduct studies and inspect work done on enhancement projects. There is a fear from landowners that allowing the Department onto their property will subject them to additional restrictions if something is seen or found on their property as part of that work. That should be discouraged from happening. If a landowner is reported, penalized, or restricted because of access given to do studies or inspections by biologists, I think access would be a thing of the past.

Most landowner concerns come from the enforcement branch of the Department. This is also a concern with the public access issue.

I think we do need to provide more access to hunting opportunities for the public as part of the PLM. How that can be constructed is the question. I currently give a guided wild pig hunt to a youth hunter each year, and this year I have also donated a cow elk hunt to Highlands Church in Paso Robles. Unfortunately, I don't think voluntary access would work.

On the issue of limiting hunters to one elk per year in California, I do not think that is necessary. I agree that obtaining more than one elk tag in the state draw or share hunt should be limited, as that tag can be drawn by a hunter participating in the public draw. However, PLM tags can be quite expensive, and most hunters will not be able to afford to participate. That tag will just be sold to another hunter who can afford the high cost.

It is unfortunate that some hunting has become so expensive; however, these fees are what fund much of the PLM work being done on private land. I currently have hunts booked for the next three years where clients will be taking more than one elk in California. Those hunts mostly come from a marketing campaign to encourage hunters to harvest a tule elk and a Roosevelt elk in one trip. We should not discourage these hunters from spending their hunting dollars in California. When we put a value on wildlife, all wildlife will win.

We should not put unnecessary restrictions on PLM operators in good standing. I have an agreement with the Department stating that if I perform all agreed wildlife enhancement projects on my PLM properties, I will be eligible for the agreed amount of tags per year with no restrictions on who they are sold to. I have completed my end of the agreement. This would have a very negative effect on how I market my hunts, and there are several other operators that would also be affected.

There needs to be some give and take when considering new regulations. I look forward to the September 10 meeting.

Thanks,

Doug Roth