

Committee Staff Summary for September 10, 2026 WRC

6. Department Updates**Today's Item****Information** ☒**Action** ☐

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

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

This is a standing agenda item for the Department to provide updates on activities of interest related to wildlife and inland fisheries. Verbal updates are expected from:

- (A) Department presentation on hunting and inland fishing statistics
- (B) Wildlife Branch
- (C) Fisheries Branch
- (D) Law Enforcement Division

Two news releases of interest are provided, highlighting grants for restoration and public access (Exhibit 2) and a Department report giving guidance on four bee species that are candidates under the California Endangered Species Act and that may be present on the landscape, providing examples of measures that may help avoid or minimize impacts to them (Exhibit 3).

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

1. [Department presentation](#) (hunting and inland fishing statistics)
2. Department news release: [WCB Approves \\$80.4 Million for Wildlife Connectivity, Salmon Recovery, Biodiversity and Public Access Projects](#), dated May 28, 2026
3. Department news release: [CDFW Publishes Guidance on Conserving CESA Candidate Bumble Bees](#), dated August 19, 2026

Committee Direction/Recommendation (N/A)



Recent Trends in Hunting and Fishing License Sales

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

Taylor Williams – R3 Manager
California Department of Fish and Wildlife



Recruit | Retain | Reactivate

What is R3?

Recruit.

Retain.

Reactivate.

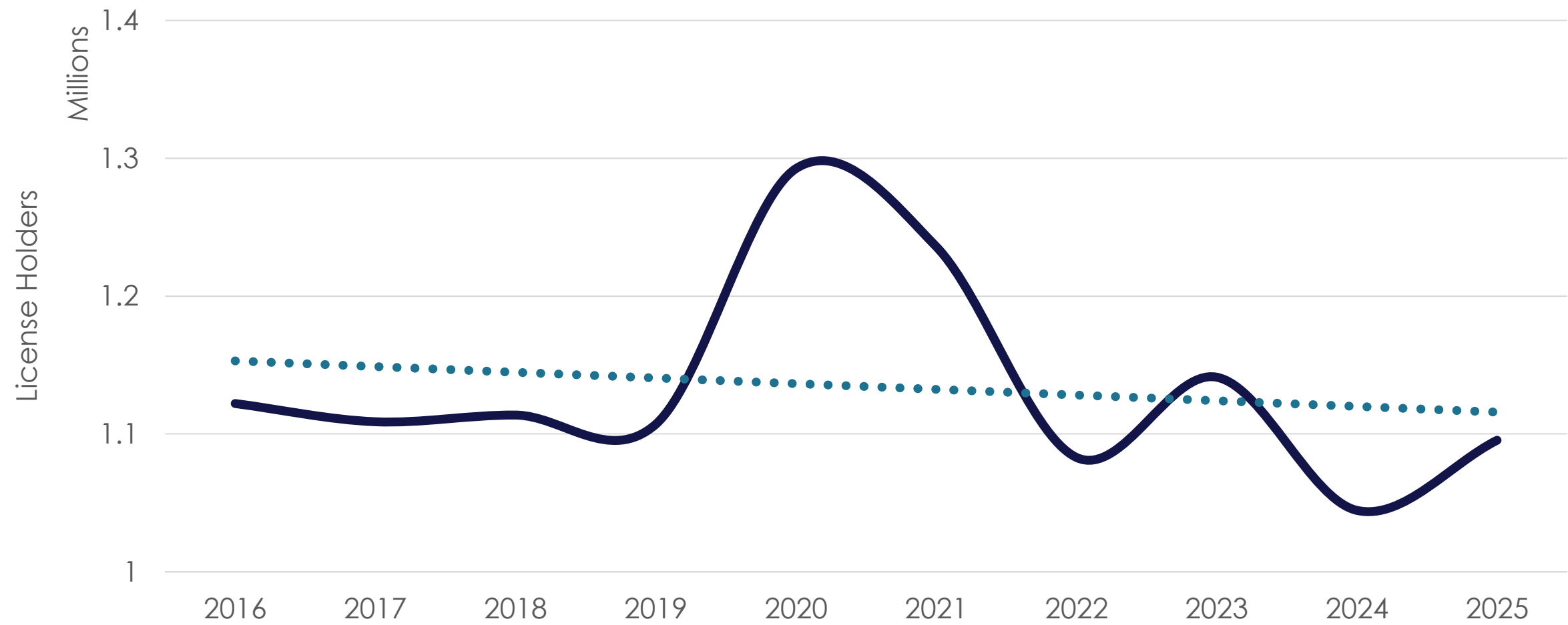
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CDFW's R3 Initiative aims to increase statewide participation in hunting, fishing, foraging and shooting sports by enhancing opportunities and fostering lifelong connections to outdoor recreation and conservation.

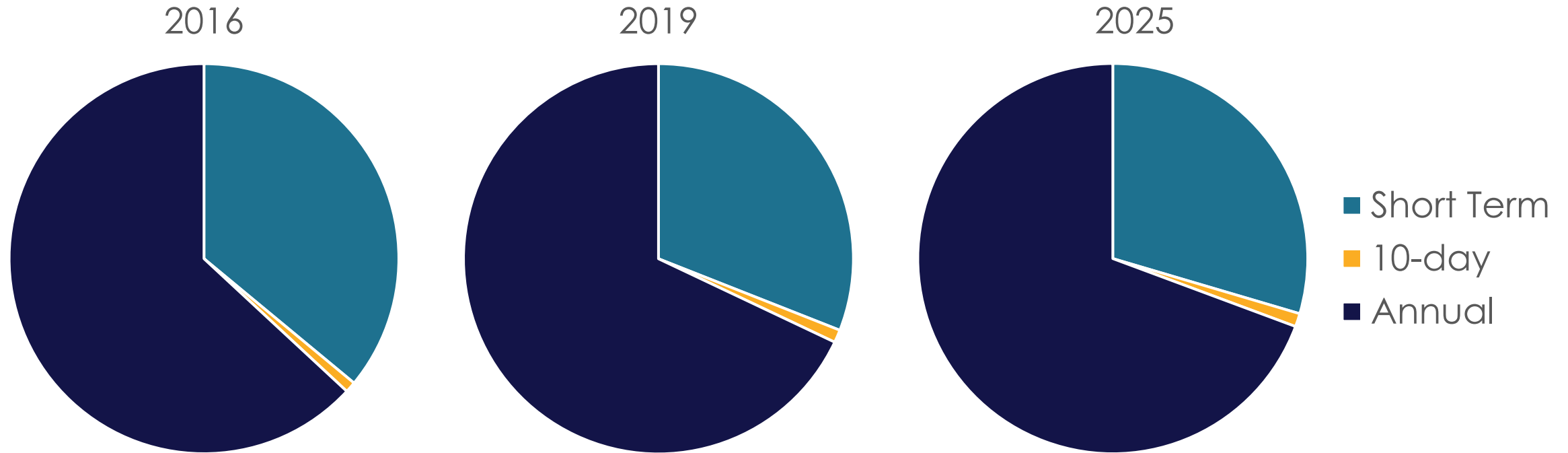


Fishing License Sales

Annual Fishing License Sales

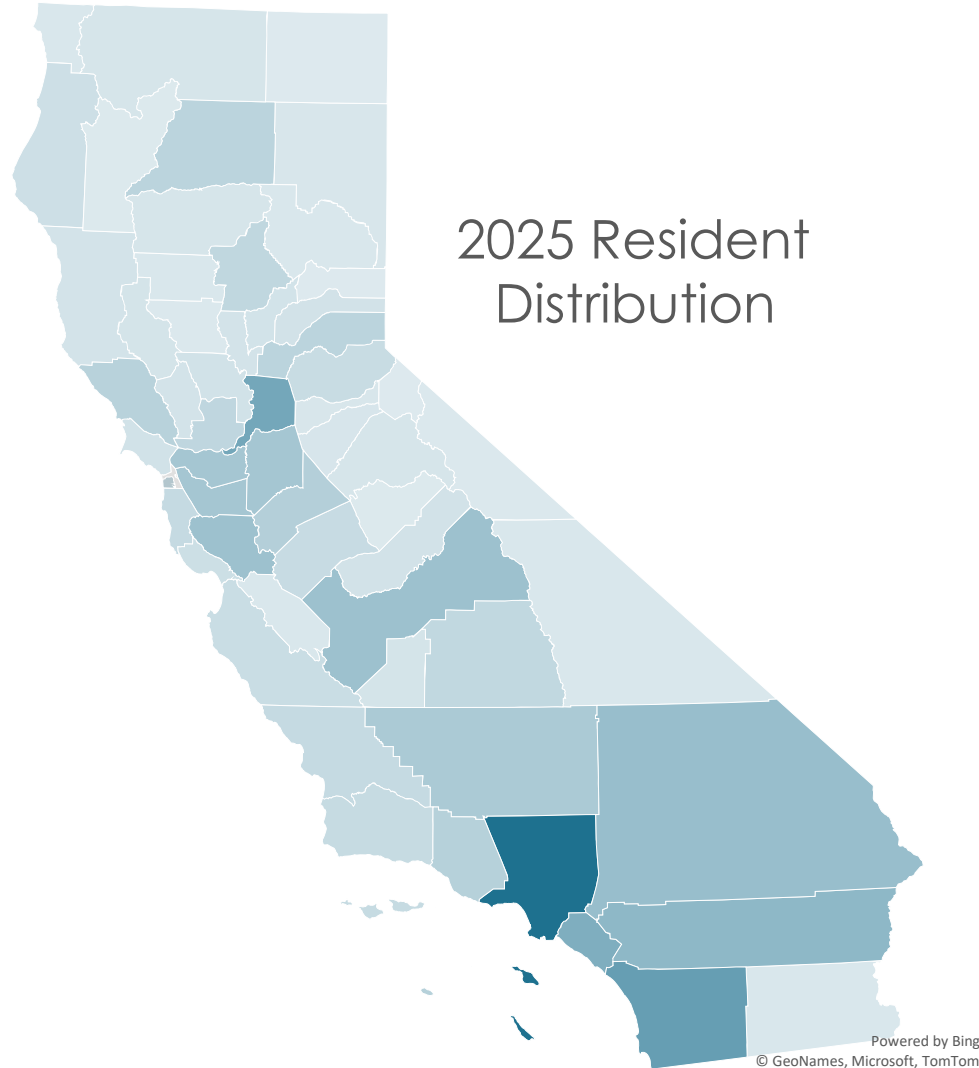


Annual vs. Short-Term



- The **introduction of 365-day licenses** brought a **3% increase** in annual sales in 2023, compared to 2019 (pre-pandemic).
- Approximately **one third of all short-term license purchasers** are nonresidents.

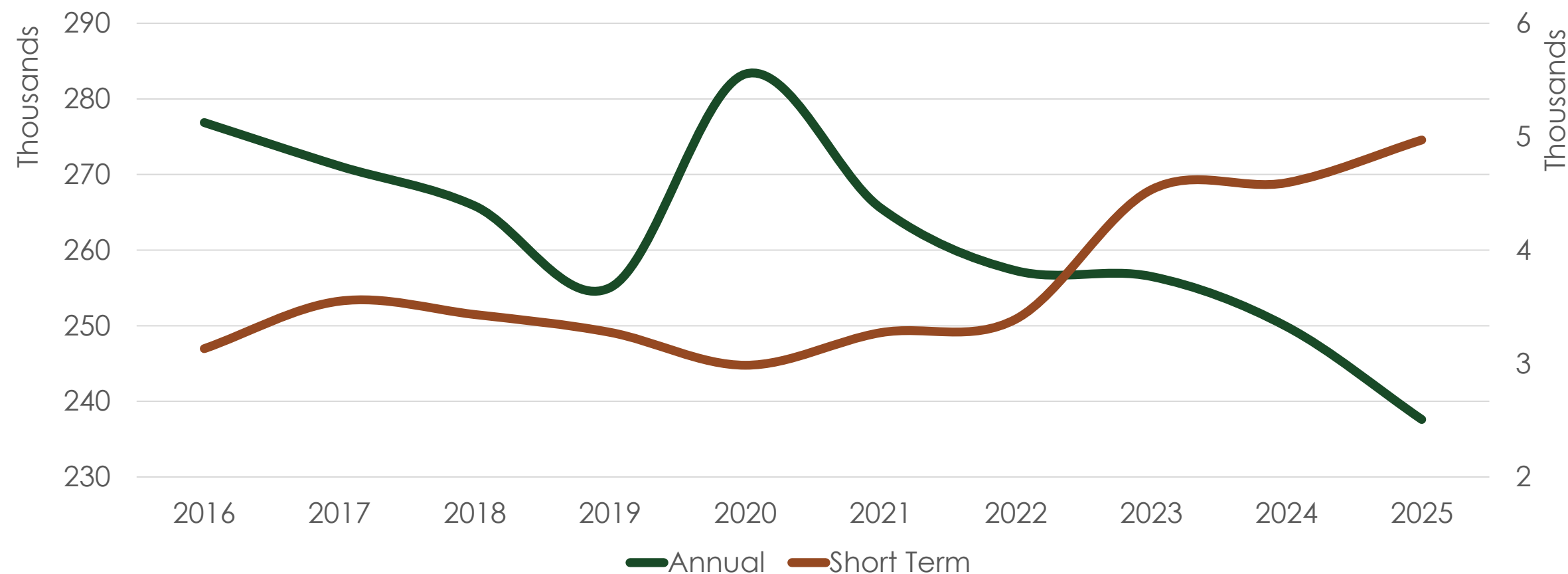
Annual Fishing License Distribution



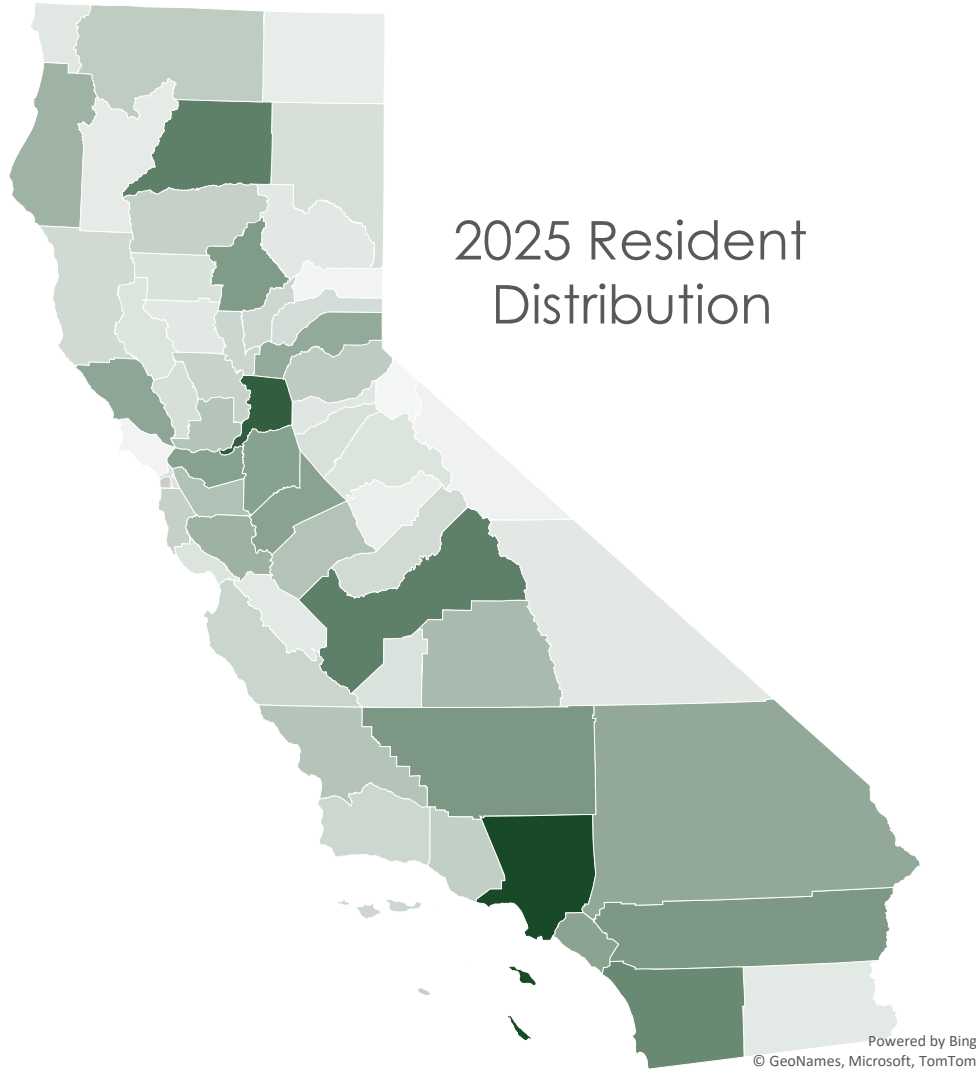
- Over the last 10 years, an average of **2.2% of annual sport fishing license** purchasers were non-residents.
- There has been a **~4% increase** in **Southern California anglers** since 2016.

Hunting License Sales

Hunting License Sales



Annual Hunting License Distribution



- Over the last 10 years, an average of **3.8% of annual hunting license** purchasers were non-residents.
- **Hunter distribution** patterns have **remained stable** throughout California, with no major regional shifts since 2016.

License Cost Trends

Annual Sport Fishing Licenses

- Annual Resident License:
 - \$43.50 in 2016 → \$58.25 in 2025 (+34%)
- Annual Non-Resident License:
 - \$117 in 2016 → \$157.25 in 2025 (+34%)

Annual Hunting Licenses

- Annual Resident License:
 - \$43.50 in 2016 → \$58.25 in 2025 (+34%)
- Annual Non-Resident License:
 - \$151.50 in 2016 → \$203.50 in 2025 (+34%)



Are Licenses More Expensive?

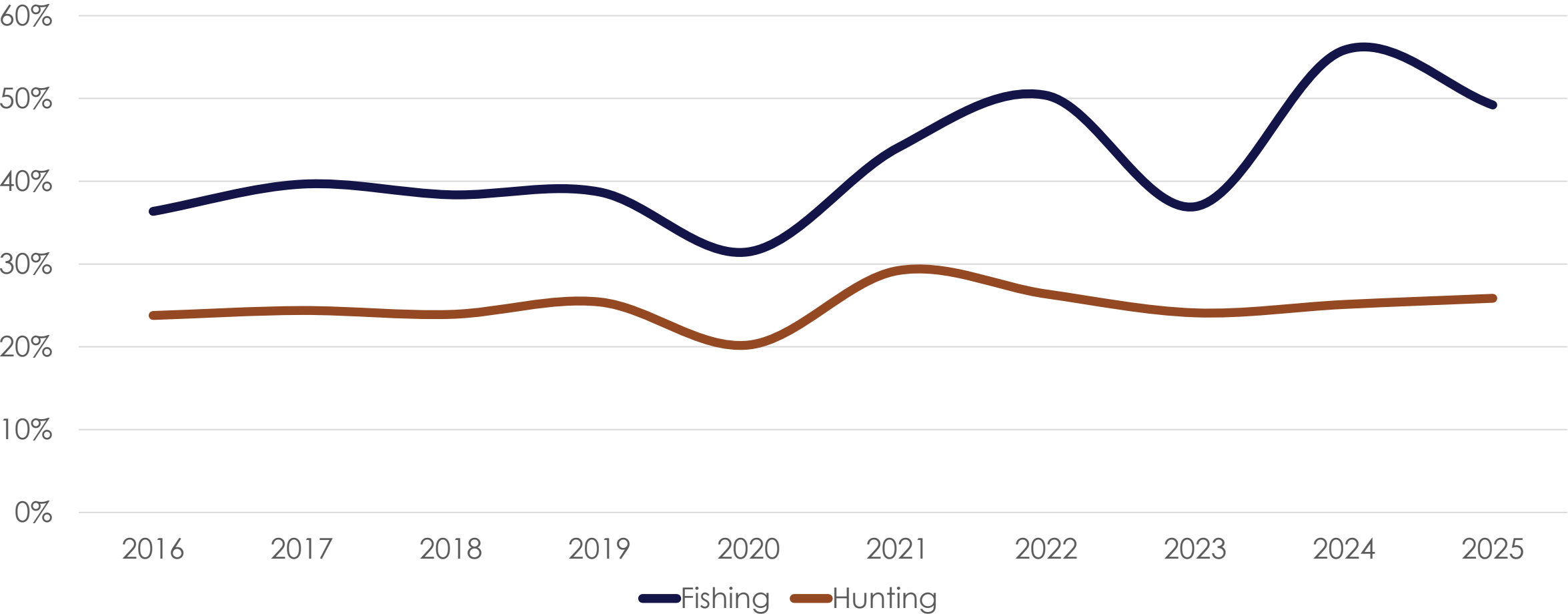
- From 2016-2025 **license prices increased ~34%**, across resident, non-resident and short-term license types.
- Over the same period, **California's cost-of-living and inflation increased by 38%**.
- License prices have not outpaced inflation. Adjusted for cost of living, **they are effectively the same or slightly less expensive than in 2016.**



Source: California Consumer Price Index, California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), Research Unit. "California Consumer Price Index 1955–2025 (All Urban Consumers)."

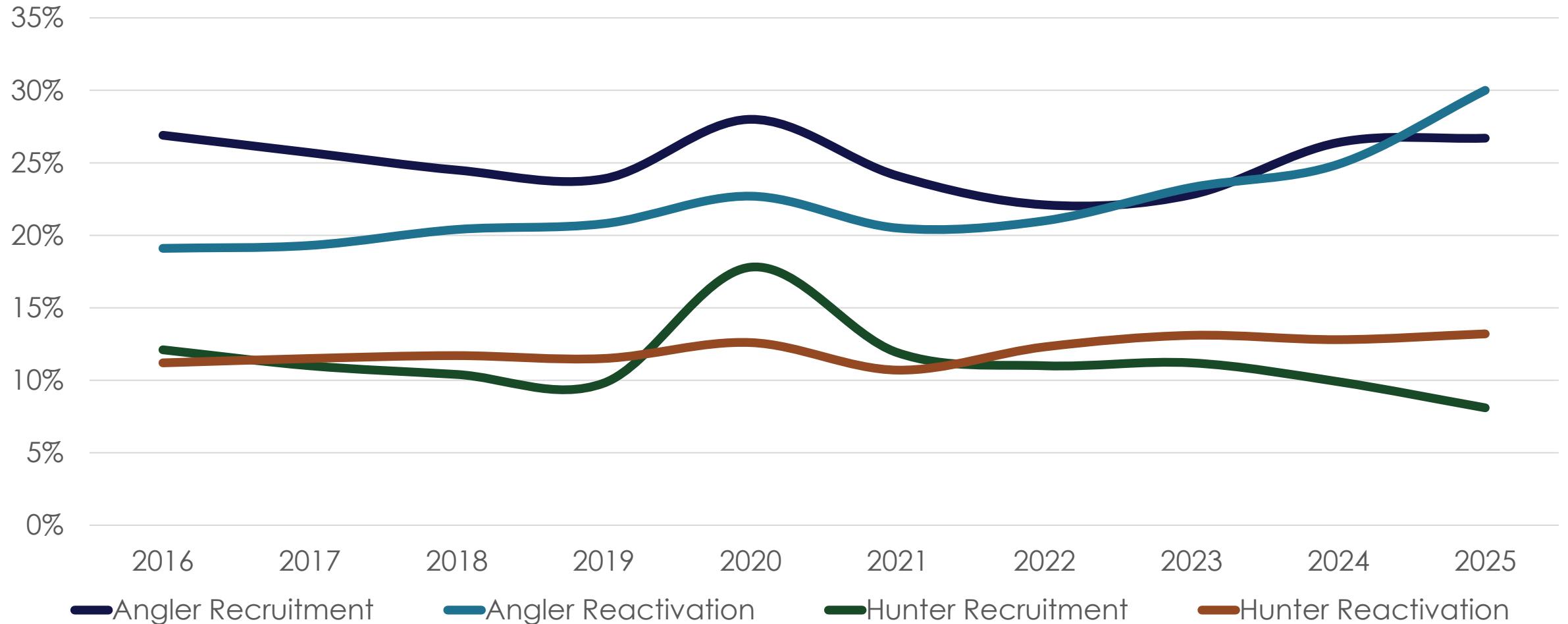
R3 Metrics

Participant Churn



R3 Metrics

New & Returning Hunters and Anglers

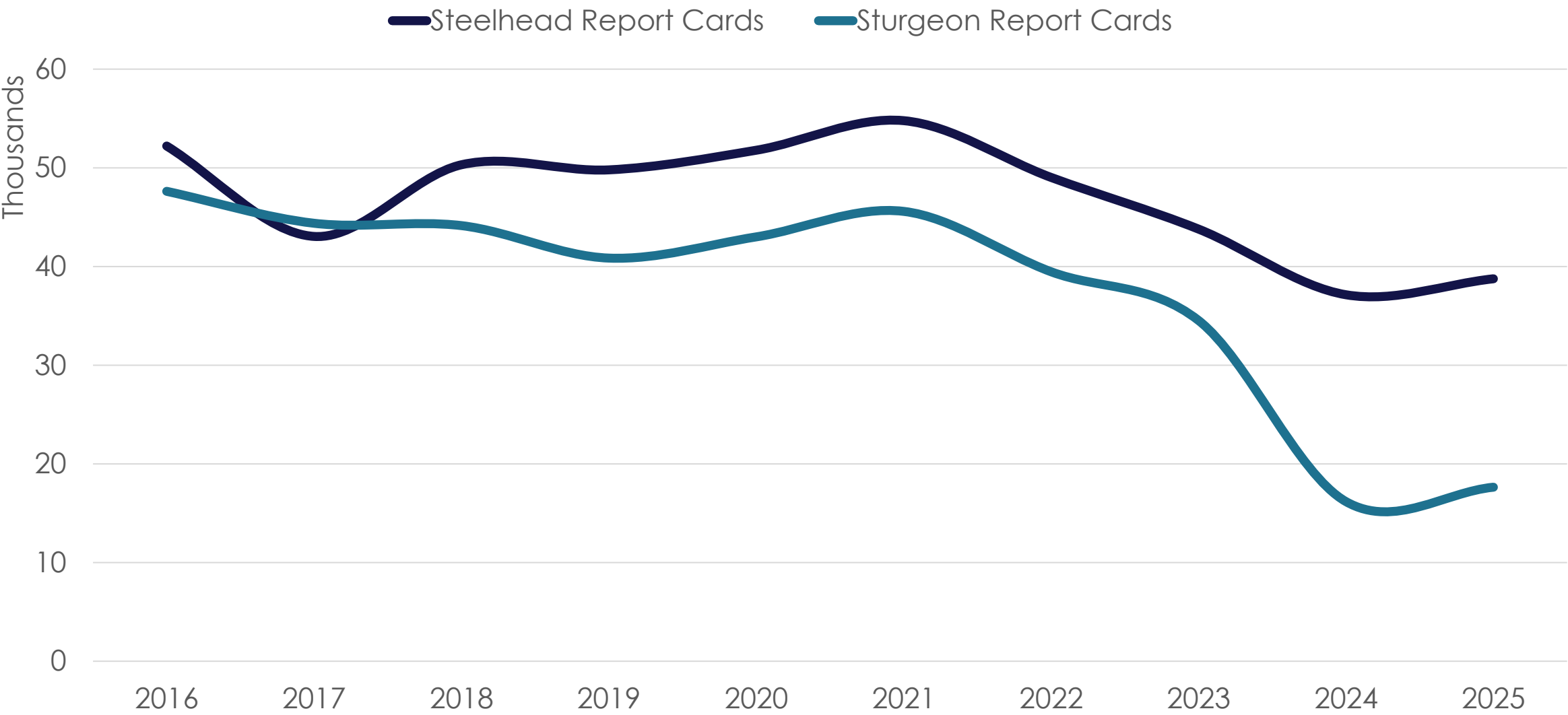


R3 Metrics

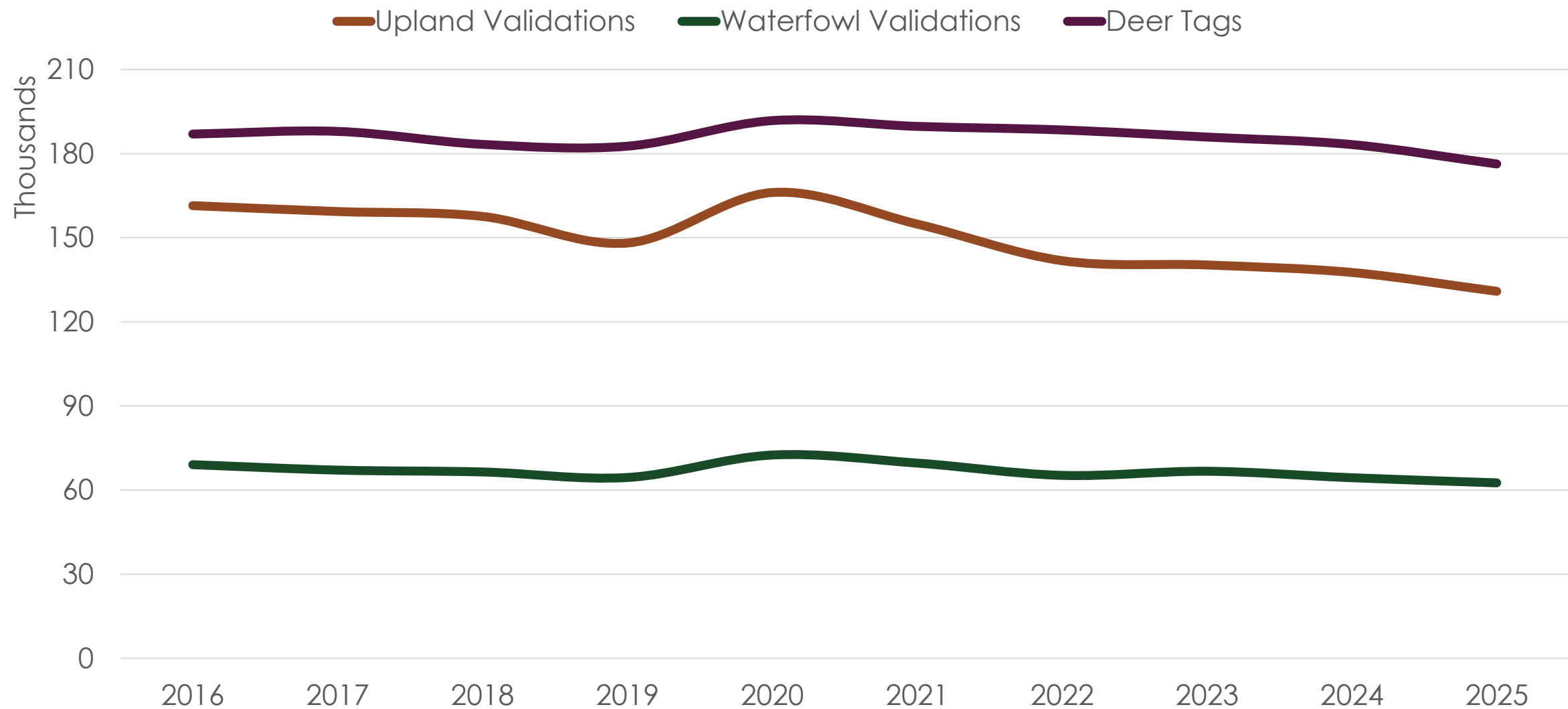
- **Hunter and angler recruitment is concentrated in the 19-36 age range**, and this pattern has remained consistent over the last decade.
- **This pattern aligns with national R3 findings**, which identify ages 19-36 as the most critical window for recruitment.
 - Participants have the highest purchasing power, are forming long-term recreation habits, and are most likely to sustain participation if engaged early.
- **Retention is strongest in the 37-54 age range** for both hunters and anglers, indicating individuals in this age group tend to remain more consistently active year to year than other age groups.



Inland Fishing Participation Indicators



Hunting Participation Indicators



Free Hunting Days

In 2023, CDFW introduced the first ever California Free Hunting Day.

- Aims to lower barriers to entry and supports recruitment and reactivation, especially for California adults in the 19-36 age range.
- 50% of FHD participants are between the ages of 15-34.
- FHDs consistently draw a higher share of female participants compared to regular hunting participation.
 - Female participation in FHD has averaged about 14% since 2023, while about 9% of standard license buyers each year are female.



National Trends Reinforce California Participation

- U.S. **angler churn remains high**, with **16.9M new/returning anglers** and **16.6M leaving**.
- **First-time participation** is growing nationally: **5.1M new anglers** in 2024 (up from 4.2M in 2023), aligning with CA's adult-onset recruitment.
- **National hunting participation** continues to **decline**, mirroring state-level patterns and reinforcing the importance of R3.
- **Top motivators for all new participants**: family time, nature, relaxation – align with California's R3 focus areas.



"2025 Special Report on Fishing." American Sportfishing Association, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.
The Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports

Summary

- Across hunting and fishing, recruitment strength is highest among younger adults (ages 19-36).
 - This aligns with national R3 findings that this age group has the highest likelihood of adopting outdoor recreation and the financial ability to participate consistently.
- Retention is strongest among participants ages 37-54.
 - Reflecting a stable group of mid-life hunters and anglers who consistently return year over year.
- Inland fishing shows higher churn than hunting.
 - Meaning, annual fishing participation relies more on recruitment and reactivation to sustain overall numbers.
- Hunting participation has remained geographically stable since 2016.



Questions?

Taylor Williams
R3 Manager

Taylor.Williams@wildlife.ca.gov



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CDFW NEWS

WCB Approves \$80.4 Million for Wildlife Connectivity, Salmon Recovery, Biodiversity and Public Access Projects

May 28, 2026



Funding Will Protect Biodiversity Hotspots and Expand Access to Nature Across California

The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) approved \$80,450,797 in grants for 23 projects across 16 counties to protect biodiversity, restore wildlife habitat and expand public access to nature. The board met today at the California Natural Resources Agency headquarters in Sacramento.

Among these, seven projects advance [the California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future \(PDF\)\(external link\)](#), restoring floodplains, improving stream function and enhancing habitat for coho salmon, Chinook salmon and steelhead trout. Projects also include investments in wildlife corridors, wildfire resiliency, wildlife-oriented recreation and butterfly pollinators.

WCB's grants advance Gov. Gavin Newsom's goal of conserving 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030, a globally adopted target known as [30x30\(external link\)](#). The initiative seeks to protect biodiversity, expand access to nature for all Californians and adapt to climate change.

Investing in the Governor's Salmon Strategy

- A \$29.3 million grant to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), in cooperation with the Sutter Extension Water District (SEWD) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, will remove the Sunset Weir on the Feather River near Live Oak in Sutter County. The project will restore fish passage to 28.5 miles of upstream habitat for Central Valley Chinook salmon, steelhead and green sturgeon. It will also restore more natural flow patterns, reconnect sediment movement and improve overall river function. Additional work includes fish screens, diversion upgrades and bank stabilization.

"We've talked about removing Sunset Weir for decades. This funding and our partnership with SEWD will finally make it possible," said James Newcomb, deputy director of natural infrastructure and ecosystem resilience with DWR. "This project restores more natural river function while continuing to support local water management needs."

- A \$4 million grant to California Trout Inc. (CalTrout) will restore approximately 500 acres of historic tidal marsh on the Cannibal Island Unit of the Eel River Wildlife Area in Humboldt County. The project will reconnect the site to tidal flow by removing fill and outdated infrastructure, improving habitat for coho salmon, Chinook salmon, steelhead and other native species while increasing resilience to sea level rise.

"The Eel River estuary is one of California's most important coastal ecosystems for native fish and local communities, and Cannibal Island sits right at its heart," said Christine Davis, North Coast regional manager of CalTrout. "With WCB's investment, we can restore tidal flow, improve flood resilience and rebuild the habitat juvenile salmon and steelhead need to recover."

- A \$2.96 million grant to the Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC) will restore 27 acres of floodplain and riparian habitat on Salt Creek in Trinity County, a tributary to the Klamath River. The project will reconnect the creek to its floodplain, improve habitat complexity for salmonids and reduce erosion risks to nearby infrastructure while improving groundwater and summer baseflow conditions. The Yurok Tribe Construction Corporation will conduct all heavy equipment grading and construction tasks.

“Restoring cool summer baseflow, fish passage, groundwater connectivity and floodplain function at the mouth of Salt Creek are foundational elements for improving salmon and steelhead habitat throughout the watershed,” said Joshua Smith, watershed stewardship program director for WRTC. “This site has been heavily damaged by mining, but it represents one of the largest groundwater recharge opportunities for salmonids in the basin, and WCB support is crucial.”

Enhancing Biodiversity, Resilience and Public Access at Park Ranch

- An \$8 million grant to Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) and Alpine County will acquire 1,688 acres near Markleeville to protect wet meadows, springs, riparian habitat, mixed conifer forest and sage-steppe in the Eastern Sierra. The property provides habitat for Lahontan cutthroat trout, Sierra Nevada red fox, western bumblebee and monarch butterfly, while improving connectivity with nearby public lands. Alpine County plans to manage the property for conservation and year-round public access, including hiking, fishing, hunting and winter recreation. Continued grazing will help reduce fuel loads and support wildfire resilience.

“We are deeply grateful to the Wildlife Conservation Board for its commitment to the East Fork Carson River, Alpine County and all who depend on and care about this outstanding river,” said Nelson Mathews, president of WRC. “Conserving Park Ranch will help protect cold water for native fish, safeguard an important migration corridor for mule deer and other wildlife, build wildfire resiliency and preserve the scenic character that makes the East Fork Carson such a special place.”

“This funding will create a permanent, community-managed wildlife preserve that reduces wildfire risk through compatible grazing and expands public access for future generations,” said Samuel R. Booth, Alpine County executive officer.

Protecting Connected Landscapes in Southern California

- A \$5.9 million grant to the Endangered Habitats Conservancy (EHC) will acquire 1,226 acres near Jamul in San Diego County to protect habitat supporting species including Hermes copper butterfly, Quino checkerspot butterfly and California red-legged frog. The property strengthens a regional wildlife corridor linking conserved lands across eastern San Diego County and expands long-term habitat protection within the Skyline conservation complex.

“The Skyline North Phase II project will conserve a large, biologically diverse and beautiful landscape of oak woodland, riparian and chaparral communities,” said Michael Beck, executive director of EHC. “This acquisition protects a critical regional wildlife linkage supporting threatened species including the Hermes copper butterfly, southwestern pond turtle and California red-legged frog.”

Expanding Pollinator Habitat and Landscape Connectivity

- A \$1.87 million grant to the Sierra Resource Conservation District (SRCD) will restore 100 acres of pollinator and riparian habitat and establish more than 26,000 linear feet of

hedgerows across Fresno County. The project supports monarch butterfly conservation while improving habitat connectivity across agricultural and urban landscapes.

“Immense habitat loss and ecosystem disruption throughout the San Joaquin Valley threatens our region’s resiliency and quality of life. Cultural knowledge of these ecosystems and how to steward them is at risk of being lost,” said Leierin Carney, restoration projects manager for the Sierra Resource Conservation District. “By expanding habitat across farms, school sites and county parks, and supporting trainings rooted in Traditional Ecological Knowledge, this project will help build the next generation of land stewards.”

About the Wildlife Conservation Board

Established in 1947, the Wildlife Conservation Board protects, restores and enhances California’s spectacular natural resources for wildlife and the public’s use and enjoyment. WCB works in partnership with Tribes, conservation groups, government agencies and the people of California to safeguard biodiversity and expand access to nature.

For more information about WCB, visit [wcb.ca.gov\(external link\)](http://wcb.ca.gov). To explore the newly funded projects, visit WCB’s [StoryMaps\(external link\)](#) pages.

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Media Contact:

[Mark Topping](#), WCB Communications, (916) 539-4673



CDFW NEWS

CDFW Publishes Guidance on Conserving CESA Candidate Bumble Bees

August 19, 2026



The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has published a document intended to assist CDFW staff, project proponents and others in understanding where and when four

bumble bee species that are candidates for listing under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) may be present on the landscape and provide examples of measures that may help avoid or minimize impacts to them.

The document, [Considerations for Conserving Crotch's Bumble Bee \(*Bombus crotchii*\), Franklin's Bumble Bee \(*Bombus franklini*\), Western Bumble Bee \(*Bombus occidentalis*\) and Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee \(*Bombus suckleyi*\) \(PDF\)](#),[\(external link\)](#) provides an overview of life history, seasonal ecology and species-specific information for the four bumble bee species.

As of September 2022, Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*), western bumble bee (*Bombus occidentalis*), Franklin's bumble bee (*Bombus franklini*) and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*) became the first insect species to become candidates for listing under CESA. They are protected by the same take prohibitions given to species listed as endangered and threatened under CESA.

Because information on species distribution, ecology, conservation needs and legal status continues to evolve, this document is intended to be a flexible, science-based resource that may be updated as new information becomes available or as species status changes through future California Fish and Game Commission determinations under CESA.

This document is non-regulatory and provided for informational purposes only. It does not establish legal requirements, CDFW policy or mandatory avoidance and minimization measures, nor does it replace project-specific review or applicable federal, state or local laws and regulations.

If project proponents believe their project may result in incidental take, CDFW recommends contacting the [CDFW regional office](#) closest to the project's location to discuss specific project-related concerns and options to comply with CESA, if necessary, based on proposed project activities.

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Media Contacts:

[Ashley Kammet](#), CDFW CESA Permitting Program

[Krysten Kellum](#), CDFW Communications, (916) 825-7120