

Staff Summary for October 13-16, 2026

4. California Waterfowlers Hall of Fame**Today's Item**Information ☐Action ☒

Commission recognition of newly inducted members of the California Waterfowlers Hall of Fame.

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

The California Waterfowlers Hall of Fame was established in 1999 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to enhancing waterfowl and their habitats in California. In 2006, the Commission began formally recognizing inductees with a resolution.

A small group of interested waterfowlers was instrumental in establishing the Hall of Fame to honor the significant contributions and lasting achievements of biologists, academics and professors, federal and state administrators, legislators, sportsmen and sportswomen, agriculturalists, and other conservationists. The selection committee includes representatives from the California Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, Conservation Solutions, Gaines and Associates, University of California at Davis, National Audubon Society, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Department.

Inductees or their representatives will be presented with their resolutions by the California Waterfowl Association (exhibits 1-6). This year's inductees are Frank Billeci, Yancey Forest-Knowles, Virginia Getz, James Cox Kennedy, Michael A. Mantell, and Zane Vorhes.

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

Commission staff: Recognize this year's Waterfowlers Hall of Fame inductees with Commission resolutions.

Exhibits

1. [Resolution for Frank Billeci](#)
2. [Resolution for Yancey Forest-Knowles](#)
3. [Resolution for Virginia Getz](#)
4. [Resolution for James Cox Kennedy](#)
5. [Resolution for Michael A. Mantell](#)
6. [Resolution for Zane Vorhes](#)

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission recognizes Frank Billeci, Yancey Forest-Knowles, Virginia Getz, James Cox Kennedy, Michael A. Mantell, and Zane Vorhes. as the newest inductees to the California Waterfowlers Hall of Fame.

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
RESOLUTION HONORING

Frank Billeci

WHEREAS, the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame was established in 2006 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to enhancing waterfowl and their habitats in California; and

WHEREAS, many wildlife professionals have dedicated their life's work to management and research to conserve waterfowl and their habitats; and

WHEREAS, many sportsmen, sportswomen, and other conservationists have served a critical role in conserving waterfowl by preserving, restoring, and enhancing natural habitats, managing agricultural habitats with wildlife in mind, and implementing other land uses specifically designed to benefit waterfowl; and

WHEREAS, some sportsmen, sportswomen, and other conservationists have significantly benefited waterfowl by advocating for legislation and other policies that provide needed resources for nesting and wintering waterfowl populations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission hereby recognizes the addition of Frank Billeci to the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission recognizes Billeci's dedication to help shape Pacific Flyway policies by championing science-based management that reflects local hunters' needs by chairing the California Waterfowl Association's Regulations and Traditions Committee for more than 30 years.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission further recognizes Billeci's hands-on conservation work, including leading the restoration of Martinez Marsh after a major oil spill, supporting bird banding and wetland management in the Suisun Marsh, and mentoring youth in the outdoors.

October 13, 2026

Eric Sklar, President

Darius W. Anderson, Vice President

Jacque Hostler-Carmesin, Member

Samantha Murray, Member

Erika Zavaleta, Member

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
RESOLUTION HONORING

Yancey Forest-Knowles

WHEREAS, the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame was established in 2006 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to enhancing waterfowl and their habitats in California; and

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WHEREAS, many sportsmen, sportswomen, and other conservationists have served a critical role in conserving waterfowl by preserving, restoring, and enhancing natural habitats, managing agricultural habitats with wildlife in mind, and implementing other land uses specifically designed to benefit waterfowl; and

WHEREAS, some sportsmen, sportswomen, and other conservationists have significantly benefited waterfowl by advocating for legislation and other policies that provide needed resources for nesting and wintering waterfowl populations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission hereby recognizes the addition of Yancey Forest-Knowles to the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission recognizes Forest-Knowles's dedication to being a conservation leader and youth educator, by serving in leadership roles with numerous organizations and helping establish California Waterfowl Association's youth outdoor camps at Grizzly Ranch.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission further recognizes Forest-Knowles's lifelong exploration of waterfowl and wetlands history, traditions, conservation and culture, connecting him with a diverse network of conservationists, artists, scientists, philanthropists and public leaders to help him write a book chronicling everything he has learned.

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Jacque Hostler-Carmesin, Member

Samantha Murray, Member

Erika Zavaleta, Member

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
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Virginia Getz

WHEREAS, the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame was established in 2006 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to enhancing waterfowl and their habitats in California; and

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WHEREAS, some sportsmen, sportswomen, and other conservationists have significantly benefited waterfowl by advocating for legislation and other policies that provide needed resources for nesting and wintering waterfowl populations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission hereby recognizes the addition of Virginia Getz to the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission recognizes Getz's experience for more than 45 years leading wetlands conservation and land protection efforts across California and the Intermountain West, delivering hundreds of restoration projects while securing critical water resources and long-term habitat protections.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission further recognizes Getz's success in developing strong working partnerships with state and federal agencies, water districts, nonprofit organizations, ranchers and duck clubs to generate significant funding for wetland and waterfowl programs.

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Samantha Murray, Member

Erika Zavaleta, Member

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
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James Cox Kennedy

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WHEREAS, some sportsmen, sportswomen, and other conservationists have significantly benefited waterfowl by advocating for legislation and other policies that provide needed resources for nesting and wintering waterfowl populations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission hereby recognizes the addition of James Cox Kennedy to the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission recognizes Kennedy's philanthropic legacy by contributing over \$100 million to the Prairie Pothole Region supporting conservation of critical grassland and wetland habitats, and contributing another \$100 million to Ducks Unlimited to support waterfowl and wetland conservation throughout the United States and Canada.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission further recognizes Kennedy's commitment to the future of conservation by contributing millions into education and research by establishing endowed chairs focused on waterfowl and wetlands at five universities across the United States.

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Michael A. Mantell

WHEREAS, the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame was established in 2006 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to enhancing waterfowl and their habitats in California; and

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission hereby recognizes the addition of Michael A. Mantell to the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission recognizes Mantell's transformative impact on conservation and environmental policy by founding the Resources Legacy Fund and Resources Law Group where he designed and led programs and projects for natural resource protection for over five million acres of land.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission further recognizes Mantell's successful advocacy efforts resulting in voter approval of over \$30 billion for investments in water, land, park, waterfowl, and ocean conservation and restoration.

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CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
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Zane Vorhes

WHEREAS, the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame was established in 2006 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to enhancing waterfowl and their habitats in California; and

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission hereby recognizes the addition of Zane Vorhes to the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission recognizes Vorhes's experience as a longtime California Waterfowl Association (CWA) leader, by establishing the CWA Regulations & Traditions Committee and establishing the CWA Disabled Hunters' Caucus, which spearheaded the construction of the first disable-access duck blind.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission further recognizes Vorhes's tireless commitment to inspiring hundreds of volunteers and donors into helping waterfowl and wetland conservation through challenging financial times.

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