

Staff Summary for October 13-16, 2026

3A. Commission Executive Director's Report**Today's Item****Information** ☒**Action** ☐

Receive updates from the executive director and staff on items of note since the previous Commission meeting in August 2026.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (NA)**Background**

The Commission employs an executive director to manage the Commission's operations and ensure that its broad responsibilities and authorities are fulfilled daily to the extent resources allow. To maintain functionality across all capacities, the Commission has delegated various authorities to its executive director, who "...shall report to the Commission at each regular meeting on important, delegated actions."

Today's report covers three topics:

- Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Awareness
- Personnel
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

JEDI Awareness*National Disability Employment Awareness Month – October*

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) recognizes the positive impact of people with disabilities in the American workforce. Begun in 1945 as "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week," the observance was officially commemorated by Congress in 1988 as NDEAM. The tribute has evolved to acknowledge the importance of increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including those with mental health and nonobvious disabilities.

California officially recognizes October as **Disability Employment Awareness Month**, pledging resources and establishing protections, which provide equal access to competitive, integrated employment opportunities to the more than seven million adults living with disabilities in the state. This year's NDEAM theme is **Celebrating Value and Talent**, which will recognize the skills and contributions Americans with disabilities add to the nation's workplaces, communities, and economy.

The California Disability Advisory Committee, in conjunction with California Highway Patrol's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, hosted their annual NDEAM Job and Resource Fair on October 8, at the State Capitol lawn. The event brought together multiple California state agencies offering career opportunities, valuable resources, and employment support for people with disabilities.

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Native American Heritage Month – November

This year's commemoration of **Native American Heritage Month (NAHM)**, will kick-off the month's festivities at the 3rd annual parade in downtown Sacramento on November 7, hosted by the California Legislative Native American Caucus. California's NAHM celebrates the state's Indigenous peoples - their resilience, cultures, and ongoing contributions to the conservation and stewardship of the state's land waters.

Officially recognized in 1976 by President Ford as **Native American Awareness Week**, NAHM evolved into a month-long celebration on August 3, 1990, after a presidential declaration.

NAHM encourages Americans to learn about Indigenous histories that are often misunderstood or overlooked, bringing attention to important issues and lived experiences. It is a time to celebrate the traditions, languages and stories of Native American communities and ensure their rich histories and contributions continue to thrive with each passing generation. This commemorative month aims to provide a platform for Indigenous peoples to share their culture, traditions, music, crafts, dance, and perceptions of life. For a list of events hosted by the California Natural Resources Agency, visit [Native American Heritage Month](#).

Different though related to NAHM, on September 25, 2026 Governor Newsom issued a proclamation (Exhibit 2) declaring the day as "**Native American Day (NAD)**," which is also recognized as a state holiday (unpaid). The day was marked with the annual NAD celebration at the Capitol lawn. In attendance were five staff who interacted with the public, answering questions and providing information on the Commission's efforts to protect California's fish and wildlife in concert with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which had a booth next to the Commission's. Staff was able to network with other state department colleagues and enjoy the cultural performances at the event.

Personnel

The Commission's administrative capacity is strained by the loss of its tribal advisor and liaison and, hence, a reduction to 10.5 positions, making clear roles and reliable backup coverage essential for maintaining service continuity within a small, specialized team. At the same time, several senior staff are nearing retirement with substantial leave balances, creating fiscal and operational constraints because vacancies cannot be filled until those liabilities are paid out. Additionally, limited in-house advancement opportunities have prompted employees to seek promotions elsewhere — an ultimate outcome supported by leadership, but challenging for workforce stability.

As a major, multi-year project concludes, the leadership team must now intensify internal efforts at cross-training, institutional knowledge transfer, process documentation, and strengthening proactive workforce planning to prepare for expected staffing transitions and to ensure resilient, uninterrupted support for Commission operations.

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California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The Commission has delegated authority to its executive director to take actions necessary to comply with CEQA. The authority includes conducting—or causing to be conducted—initial studies and deciding whether to prepare draft environmental impact reports, negative declarations, mitigated negative declarations, or determinations of exemption.

Since the August 2026 meeting, your executive director determined that one regulatory action regarding conditional take of western spadefoot is exempt from CEQA.

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

1. [“Staff Time Allocation and Activities,”](#) dated October 1, 2026
2. [“Native American Day Proclamation,”](#) dated September 25, 2026

Motion (N/A)

California Fish and Game Commission Staff Time Allocation and Activities

October 1, 2026

For the months of August 2026 and September 2026, this report identifies where California Fish and Game Commission staff (including limited term and temporary help) allocated its time in general activity categories, trends in staff time allocation, and examples of specific activities in which staff engaged.

General Time Allocation

Task Category	Aug Staff Time	Sept Staff Time
Regulatory Program	14%	16%
Non-Regulatory Programs	8%	6%
Commission and Committee Meetings	33%	23%
Legal Matters	4%	5%
External Affairs	7%	12%
Special Projects	7%	5%
Administration	23%	23%
Leave Time	11%	17%
Unfilled Positions	0%	0%
Total Staff Time ¹	107%	107%

¹ Total staff time is greater than 100% due to overtime

Trends

Time allocations of note for this period are *Regulatory Program*, *External Affairs*, *Administration* and *Leave Time*.

Regulatory Program hours increased in September from the already high figures in August. The rise reflects the significant staff commitment required to prepare seven rulemaking items for the four-day October Commission meeting, as well as ongoing work by core teams developing six Commission-approved rulemakings scheduled for notice in December.

External Affairs hours increased in September due to a higher number of public petitions for regulation change, staff participating in public outreach during Native American Day at the State Capitol, and directed outreach to stakeholders and interested parties related to marine protected areas, aquaculture leases, and rulemakings. Also contributing was the reinstatement of a collaborative meeting between the Commission's and Department's regulations teams, which is now planned for every other month.

Administration hours remained elevated due to the 80-hour supervisor training the program manager successfully completed as part of a state-mandated requirement, preparing for

interviews for next year's California Sea Grant state fellow, and initiating a request for approval to extend the temporary marine environmental scientist for a second, and final, year.

Leave Time hours significantly increased as staff took final summer vacations and several senior employees participated in leave-reduction plans. The increase was further affected by unexpected leave by staff members recovering from injuries or addressing family needs.

Sample Activities for August 2026

- Advanced implementation of Commission ocean fisheries priorities and policy, including its Coastal Fishing Communities Policy, by contributing to a draft climate ready fisheries strategy being developed by California Ocean Protection Council staff
- In cooperation with industry representatives, completed development of a rulemaking related to a potential candidate species under the California Endangered Species Act
- Attended the California State Legislature's Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture Committee Fisheries Forum
- The executive director, marine advisor, and wildlife advisor served as a panel hosted by the California Ocean Science Trust for its webinar series titled "Navigating Your Future: Careers at the Ocean and Coastal Science-Policy Nexus"
- Contributed to the quarterly California Hunting and Conservation Coalition meeting
- Participated in the California Natural Resources Agency Headquarters Building Campus Council meeting to support a thriving and engaging campus for thousands of employees
- Participated in a Phase-0 interagency coordination meeting to inform a potential aquaculture state water-bottom lease applicant, and furthered progress on a variety of pending lease action requests for existing state water-bottom aquaculture leaseholders
- Participated in interagency coordination meetings on marine protected area petitions
- Began strategizing ways to prepare for the October four-day Commission meeting to help ensure a successful meeting and sane staff
- Participated in the MPA Statewide Leadership Team Working Group meeting
- Prepared for and conducted three publicly noticed meetings (Commission, Tribal Committee, and Wildlife Resources Committee), and strategized for and began implementing plans for the Commission's first ever four-day public meeting

Sample Activities for September 2026

- Met with partner non-governmental organizations on potential areas of overlap to leverage through collaboration
- Participated in a meeting of the Climate Ready Decision Support Tool Advisory Team meeting convened by Pacific Fishery Management Council
- Coordinated with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) program staff on emerging management issues, options, and stakeholder feedback, including for the commercial coonstripe shrimp fishery and kelp restoration and management plan

- Participated in the monthly meeting of the interagency Chronic Wasting Disease Task Force led by the Department
- Participated in office hours and reviewed finalist information for the 2027 California Sea Grant State Fellowship
- Attended a California Coastal Commission meeting to learn more about a proposed kelp farming project in federal waters
- Participated in an offshore aquaculture interagency working group to advance collaboration in aquaculture management across state and federal agencies
- Participated in a Phase-0 interagency coordination meeting to inform a potential aquaculture state water-bottom lease applicant, and furthered progress on a variety of pending lease action requests for existing state water-bottom aquaculture leaseholders
- Participated in the monthly tribal affairs meeting of the California Natural Resources Agency to discuss ways to strengthen working relations with California Native American tribes and to coordinate tribal affairs policies and programs
- Conducted education and outreach at California Native American Day 2026, held at the California State Capitol
- Engaged with agency partners, stakeholders and interested parties regarding marine protected area petitions
- Attended a webinar to learn about the development of a climate resilience framework for marine fisheries called FishSCORE2030
- Strategized and developed a plan for the Commission's first ever four-day meeting
- Prepared for and conducted one publicly noticed meeting (Wildlife Resources Committee) and prepared for one publicly noticed meeting (Commission)

Sample Tasks for the General Allocation Categories

Regulatory Program

- Coordinate with the Department to develop timetables and rulemaking documents
- Prepare and file notices, re-notices, and initial/final statements of reasons
- Prepare administrative records
- Track and respond to public comments
- Consult, research, and respond to inquiries from the Office of Administrative Law
- Facilitate California Environmental Quality Act document review, certifications of findings, and filings with the state clearinghouse

Non-Regulatory Program

- Department partnerships in jointly developing management plans and concepts
- Develop, review, and amend Commission policies
- Review and process California Endangered Species Act petitions
- Manage aquaculture/kelp harvest lease applications and amendments
- Review and process experimental fishing permit applications and amendments

Commission and Committee Meetings and Support

- Research subject-specific information
- Develop and distribute meeting agendas and materials
- Conduct agenda and debrief meetings
- Prepare meeting outcomes, audio files, and voting records
- Develop meeting correspondence
- Prepare for and conduct meeting management activities
- Process submitted meeting materials
- Provide commissioner support

Legal Matters

- Public Records Act requests
- California Law Review Commission
- Process appeals and accusations
- Respond to litigation
- Process kelp and state water bottom leases
- Prepare administrative records

External Affairs

- Engage with stakeholders
- Maintain state, federal, and tribal government relations
- Process/analyze non-regulatory requests
- Process/analyze regulation change petitions
- Engage and educate legislative staff, monitor legislation
- Respond to general public inquiries
- Review/respond to correspondence
- Website maintenance
- Workshops

Special Projects

- Coastal Fishing Communities
- Streamlining routine regulatory actions

Administration

- Staff training and development
- Purchases and payments
- Contract management
- Personnel management
- Budget development and tracking
- Health and safety oversight
- Internal processes and procedures
- Document archival

Leave Time

- Personal Leave Plan 2025, holiday, vacation, annual, sick, jury duty, bereavement



GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM

Governor Newsom Proclaims Native American Day

SACRAMENTO – Governor Gavin Newsom today issued a proclamation declaring September 25, 2026 as “Native American Day.”

PROCLAMATION

Today we celebrate the 59th annual California Native American Day. This year’s theme, “Inherent Sovereignty: Tribal Nations Fighting to Protect Our People and Defend Our Land,” reflects tribal nations’ deep commitment to safeguarding inherent rights to Native bodily autonomy, Native spiritual and material relationships with lands and waters, and the unique cultural and human expression of Native peoples across the state.

Over the last several years, tribal nations have secured incredible milestones in furtherance of these rights. Through their advocacy, they have secured historic funding and policy initiatives to create safety and security for their people in the areas of housing, public safety and the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, wellness, and community care. They have also secured historic land return and access throughout the state, expanding tribal ownership and co-stewardship through innovative partnerships and sheer determination to restore ancestral homelands.

On this final Native American Day of my administration, we also reflect on our collective progress to address the most pressing issues of our time. Together, in partnership with California tribal nations, we have looked squarely at the violence and exploitation that marked the early relationship between the state and Native peoples, worked to address the harmful legacies of those early injustices and have begun to chart a path toward a better future for all based in truth, healing, and accountability. In shaping this future, we have chosen to do more than simply close gaps where they exist — we are aiming for the highest reaches of what could be possible in advancing Native excellence.

Together with tribal partners, we have also proven that innovation and tradition are not in competition, but that durable progress relies on both. In advancing our bold climate goals, we have had measurable success through restoring Traditional Ecological Knowledges, tribal experts, and Native stewardship practices to the lands and waters of this state. In maintaining our status as the fourth largest economy, tribal nations have led in job creation and economic growth, often in areas

hungry for attention and investment throughout the state. And as we fight to sustain the arts, Native artists and practitioners continue to remind us of our common connection to beauty and humanity.

This California Native American Day, I encourage all Californians to reflect on our shared commitment to true partnership and accountability toward California Native Americans, and to continue toward a better future grounded in humility, respect, and inclusion for all.

NOW THEREFORE I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim September 25, 2026 as “Native American Day.”

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 25th day of September 2026.

GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California

ATTEST:
SHIRLEY N. WEBER, Ph.D.
Secretary of State