

Staff Summary for June 11-12, 2025

29A. Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC)**Today's Item****Information** ☐**Action** ☒

Receive summary and consider approving any recommendations from the May 15, 2025 Committee meeting. Discuss referred topics and consider revisions to topics and timing.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| • Previous WRC meeting | May 15, 2025; WRC |
| • Today consider approving WRC recommendations | June 11-12, 2025 |
| • Next WRC meeting | September 11, 2025; WRC |

Background

WRC works under Commission direction to set and accomplish its work plan (Exhibit 1). Today, the Commission will receive a report on the previous WRC meeting as well as provide direction for any referred topics and revisions to WRC topics and timing.

Previous Committee Meeting

WRC met on May 15 in Sacramento, with Zoom and phone options. Official meeting minutes are posted on the [Commission's YouTube page](#), with a link also available on the Commission's meetings page at fgc.ca.gov/meetings. An abbreviated summary is included in this document.

Annual Regulation Changes

The Committee discussed waterfowl hunting, Central Valley sport fishing, and Klamath River Basin sport fishing. Topics included low salmon abundances on the Klamath, recent closures, and the potential for recolonization of previously above-dam river stretches.

Periodic Regulation Changes

- Upland (Resident) Game Bird Hunting

The Department summarized pheasant hunting survey results, indicating that most hunters are not interested in regulatory changes at this time.

- Big Game Hunting

Deer hunting discussions covered the deer management plan, connectivity issues, chronic wasting disease, and community science. WRC requested additional information from the Department regarding connectivity and community science.

Elk hunting discussions revolved around equity of hunting tags for all Californians regardless of financial means, increasing elk populations and resulting conflict, incentivizing large landowners and businesses to share access, the role of predators, and ways to encourage hunters to take more cows.

Regarding bighorn sheep, the Department responded to a question about the presence of domestic sheep at the White Mountain Research Center, a unit of the University of

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California Natural Reserve System and the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability that fosters scientific and educational advancement in the Eastern Sierra.

For pronghorn antelope, the Department noted that it requested the Commission reduce hunting tags over the last two regulatory cycles and continues to monitor and evaluate tag types. Serious habitat concerns for pronghorn remain.

- Black Bear Hunting

The Department presented information on black bear hunting, noting that the harvest cap of 1,700 bears has not been met since 2012; last year's harvest was the lowest in 20 years. The Department is developing a survey, and public opinion information from the bear plan comments is available. The Department intends to recommend expanding the bear hunt area to include the state's northeast corner and has also received requests to allow two tags per person per season without increasing the harvest cap.

Participants discussed the Department's modelling efforts and the way in which bear population estimates are currently produced. They also discussed the limited evidence of a direct connection between hunting and bear depredations. Participant opinions varied on expanding bear hunting areas, allowing a second bear tag, hunting with dogs (currently outlawed), and bear hunting in general.

WRC expressed interest in receiving bear-human conflict data since 2017, and a presentation on how bear populations will be monitored going forward.

Take of Coyotes

The co-chairs started the discussion by sharing with the public that no recommendation was presently being considered. Staff clarified the differences between statute, regulation and policy, and outlined key laws and policy related to take of coyote.

Many participants expressed gratitude to the Commission for referring the topic back to WRC for further discussion. Others expressed appreciation for an improved understanding of state laws and regulations, adding that it would have been more helpful to have the presentation in the materials distributed in advance of the meeting.

Those opposed to regulation changes for take of coyote cited: a perceived lack of clarity regarding the stated problem; the need to protect livestock, irrigation infrastructure, humans and pets; coyote impacts on other wildlife species (e.g., game species); and stable to increasing coyote populations and ranges. WRC heard numerous accounts of agricultural and ranching damage, and dangers to pets and people in urban environments caused by coyotes. Some participants objected to the term "indiscriminate" with coyote killing.

Those in support of coyote regulation changes cited: scientific evidence suggesting a lack of effectiveness in indiscriminately killing coyotes due to biological compensatory mechanisms; general public support for limiting carnivore take; the ecological importance of coyotes; successes with non-lethal methods for managing human conflicts; and practical ecological services provided by coyotes (e.g., rodent control). Some livestock ranchers and urban residents emphasized their success in curbing human/coyote conflict without lethal techniques.

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Some proponents of new regulations supported bag limits and/or seasons, while others advocated for more limitations. While some participants questioned a conflict between Section 472 of Title 14 and Commission policies, the sentiment that a conflict exists was common.

Department staff acknowledged that coyote management is highly complicated. Coyote is the fourth most common reported species in the wildlife incident reporting system, with an increasing trend observed primarily in urban settings. Nevertheless, the Department is prepared to provide any relevant data and information available to support WRC discussions.

Department staff also highlighted that the legal definition of “take” includes activities such as hazing and other non-lethal control and behavior modification methods. The definition should be considered when evaluating any changes to coyote regulations.

No formal recommendation was made.

Committee Recommendations

No recommendations were made by WRC.

Committee Work Plan and Future Meetings

The updated WRC work plan (Exhibit 1) outlines topics and timelines for Commission-referred items, including WRC- and staff-proposed changes.

The big game hunting topic is updated to list the big game species whose hunting regulations are being reviewed (deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, black bear, and Nelson bighorn sheep).

Significant Public Comments

1. A commenter opposes trophy hunting of black bears and the use of hounds, bait, and spring hunting (Exhibit 2).
2. A commenter appreciates the coyote conversation at the last WRC and praises the presence of wildlife officers at the meeting (Exhibit 3).
3. The San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau and two commenters oppose regulations limiting the take of coyotes (sample in Exhibit 4).

Recommendation

Commission staff: Approve the WRC work plan as reflected in Exhibit 1, including any changes identified during today’s meeting.

Exhibits

1. [WRC work plan, updated May 16, 2025](#)
2. [Email from Richard Layne, received May 29, 2025](#)
3. [Letter from Lee White, received May 23, 2025](#)
4. [Letter from Paul Clark, Executive Director, San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau, received May 13, 2025](#)

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Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission approves the changes to the work plan as presented in Exhibit 1 and discussed today.

California Fish and Game Commission
Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) Work Plan Scheduled
Topics and Timeline for Items Referred to WRC
Updated May 16, 2025

Note: Proposed changes to topics/timing are shown in blue underscore or strike-out font

Topics	Category	Jan 2025	May 2025	Sep 2025
Periodic and Annual Regulations				
Upland (Resident) Game Bird <u>Hunting</u>	Regulatory		X	<u>X/R</u>
Big Game Hunting (<u>Deer, Elk, Pronghorn</u> <u>Antelope, Black Bear, Nelson Bighorn Sheep</u>)	Regulatory	X/R	X	<u>X/R</u>
Waterfowl Hunting	Annual Regulatory		X	<u>X/R</u>
Central Valley Sport Fishing	Annual Regulatory		X	<u>X/R</u>
Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing	Annual Regulatory		X	<u>X/R</u>
Inland Sport Fishing (including striped bass)	Regulatory	X/R		<u>X</u>
Department Lands	Regulatory		X	<u>X/R</u>
Regulations & Legislative Mandates				
Restricted Species	Regulatory			
Take of Coyotes	Referral for Review	X/R	<u>X/R</u>	
Bear Hunting	Referral for Review		X	X/R

KEY: X Discussion scheduled X/R Recommendation potentially developed and moved to FGC

From: Richard Layne [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 29, 2025 09:27 AM
To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
Subject: Hunting black bears in CA

Dear Commissioners,

I am very much against the trophy hunting of black bears. I urge you not to increase the number of bears that can be killed. I particularly urge you not to allow cruel and unsporting methods like hunting with hounds or bait or spring hunting.

I understand there are differing views on this controversial issue, but certainly we should all be able to agree that the hunting methods you authorize should not be cruel to black bears. No one should want these magnificent animals to unnecessarily suffer.

Thank you for hearing my thoughts on this .

Richard Layne
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

May 16, 2025

Commissioner Erika Zavaleta
California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944200
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Commissioner Zavaleta,

I want to thank you and commissioner Anderson for having the WRC meeting on May 15th. I appreciate your efforts in making it so that everyone had an opportunity to be heard in a respectful open discussion. I arrived early that morning and was met in the hallway by the woman who apparently ran the logistics for the meeting and she was very kind in helping me finding the room. She also explained what would go on and when item number four was going to be introduced. I was also impressed by the staff member's presentation explaining the difference between code, policy, and regulation. As a retired professor, in my career, I have seldom heard such an easy to understand explanation of differences. I will keep and pass along copies of the printed Powerpoint for future reference.

I was glad to see so many fish and wildlife officers there observing what was going on. I interact with some of the wildlife officers in my area almost on a weekly basis while trying to help livestock and agricultural producers deal with their conflicts with predators, mainly coyotes. The officers are always helpful even though I know they are overstressed by the large areas they are responsible for. The wildlife biologists and environmental scientists I interact with are equally responsive, although equally stressed due to the overall lack of staffing. It's unfortunate that in a state as prosperous as California we have staffing issues which leads to less than desirable effect on the people and the wildlife of the state.

Respectfully,



Lee White



May 16, 2025

Commissioner Darius W. Anderson
California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944200
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Commissioner Anderson,

I want to thank you and commissioner Zavaleta for having the WRC meeting on May 15th. I appreciate your efforts in making it so that everyone had an opportunity to be heard in a respectful open discussion. I arrived early that morning and was met in the hallway by the woman who apparently ran the logistics for the meeting and she was very kind in helping me finding the room. She also explained what would go on and when item number four was going to be introduced. I was also impressed by the staff member's presentation explaining the difference between code, policy, and regulation. As a retired professor, in my career, I have seldom heard such an easy to understand explanation of differences. I will keep and pass along copies of the printed Powerpoint for future reference.

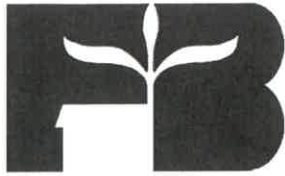
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Respectfully,



Lee White





SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY FARM BUREAU

4875 MORABITO PLACE, SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93401
PHONE (805) 543-3654 SLOFARMBUREAU.ORG

May 2, 2025

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5/13/25

Dr. Erika Zavaleta, President
California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 994244-2090

RE: Proposed Change in Status of Coyotes to Game Animals

Dear Dr. Zavaleta and Commissioners:

Beef cattle production accounted for \$69,000,000.00 in market value for San Luis Obispo County in 2023. The largest cause of calf loss is predation by coyotes. Coyotes are great in number in our county and have few natural predators in this region. Furthermore, coyotes pose a continual threat to rural, suburban, and urban pets. Owners are often forced to keep their cats, dogs, and chickens either penned up or indoors for long periods of time due to the threat of coyote attack. And while rare, there are a growing number of incidents where humans – particularly children – have been attacked by coyotes.

Changing the classification of coyotes from nongame animals to game animals would have a grave detrimental effect on our beef and lamb producers. Because coyote depredation happens year-round, establishing a hunting season and a bag limit restricts beef and lamb producers' ability to protect newborn animals.

For these reasons, San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau urges the California Fish and Game Commission to not place hunting or taking restrictions on coyotes and to not reclassify them as game animals.

Sincerely,

Paul E. Clark,
Executive Director,
San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau

Cc: Steven Fenaroli, California Farm Bureau