

Staff Summary for October 13-16, 2026

13A. Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC)**Today's Item**Information ☐Action ☒

Receive a summary and recommendations from the September 10, 2026 committee meeting, potentially act on the recommendations, discuss referred topics, and consider revisions to topics and timing.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Previous committee meeting September 10, 2026; WRC
- **Today, consider approving WRC recommendations** **October 13-16, 2026**
- Next committee meeting January 10, 2027; 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 and recommendations, and provide direction for any referred topics and revisions to WRC topics and timing.

Previous Committee Meeting

WRC met on September 10 in Sacramento, with Zoom and phone options for public participation. 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/2026. An abbreviated summary is included in this document. Detailed overviews, exhibits, and presentations for each of the topics are available in the [WRC meeting materials](#).

Private Lands Management (PLM) Program

Discussion centered on two proposed regulatory amendments — establishing a PLM tag sales limit and requiring public access to PLM lands — as well as the broader intent behind these changes. WRC expressed interest in the Department providing more detailed information on PLM properties, including tag types and the level of public interaction. The co-chairs generally aligned on pursuing a timely rulemaking for 2027, while also continuing dialogue and revisiting key details at the January 2027 WRC meeting (reflected in the proposed changes to the work plan).

Annual and Periodic Regulation Changes

WRC discussed declining deer ratios, with Department staff explaining that the trend stems from many small, interacting factors rather than a single cause. Overall, there was shared agreement on the need for coordinated outreach to local governments in anticipation of the forthcoming deer management plan.

Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation Program

The WRC co-chairs and public expressed gratitude for information provided in a presentation on hunting and inland fishing statistics; the committee chairs indicated they would appreciate an update in the future to remain aware of trends.

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WRC Recommendations

WRC developed two recommendations to the Commission:

1. *Annual Regulation Changes*. Support future rulemakings regarding waterfowl hunting, Central Valley sport fishing, and Klamath River Basin sport fishing, based on the Department's recommendations presented to WRC in September.
2. *Periodic Regulation Changes*. Support future rulemakings related to deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and black bear hunting, based on the Department's recommendations presented to WRC in September.

Significant Public Comments

The California Deer Association comments on the Department's recommendations for amendments to the PLM program, including supporting more rigorous enforcement, expressing concerns regarding limited public inclusion, and raising legal questions regarding both limited public inclusion and Department access.

Recommendation

Commission staff: Approve the WRC recommendations from the September 10, 2026 meeting and the work plan as proposed in Exhibit 1.

Exhibits

1. [WRC work plan](#), updated October 1, 2026
2. [Letter from Josh Brones, Strategic Director, California Deer Association](#), received September 12, 2026

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission approves the recommendations from the September 10, 2026 Wildlife Resources Committee meeting, and approves the work plan as presented in Exhibit 1, plus any further changes discussed today.

California Fish and Game Commission
Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) Work Plan
Scheduled Topics and Timeline for Items Referred to WRC
Updated October 1, 2026

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

Topics	Category	May 2026	Sep 2026	Jan 2027
Periodic and Annual Regulations				
Upland (Resident) Game Bird Hunting	Regulatory	X	X/R	
Big Game Hunting (deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, black bear, Nelson bighorn sheep)	Regulatory	X	X/R	
Waterfowl Hunting	Annual Regulatory	X	X/R	
Central Valley Sport Fishing	Annual Regulatory	X	X/R	
Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing	Annual Regulatory	X	X/R	
<u>Inland</u> Sport Fishing	Regulatory		X	<u>X/R</u>
Department Lands	Regulatory	X/R		
Regulations & Legislative Mandates				
Mammal Trapping	Regulatory	X/R		
Private Lands Management Program		X	X/R	<u>X/R</u>
Restricted Species	Regulatory			
Take of Coyotes	Referral for Review			

KEY: X = Vetting/Discussion X/R = Discussion/Potential Recommendation to Commission

From: Josh Brones <jpbrones@caldeer.org>

Sent: Saturday, September 12, 2026 12:53 PM

To: Barr, Victoria [REDACTED]; FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

Subject: Fw: Proposed Modifications to Private Land Management Program

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

Good afternoon, Victoria and Melissa,

I would like to offer a sincere thank you to you, the Department, and the Commission staff for your efforts to facilitate a discussion of the Department's outreach efforts to the enrollees and stakeholders of the PLM program during Thursday's WRC meeting. CDA appreciates the continued engagement on such an important program that we all care about so deeply.

I was disappointed to discover, however, that CDA's letter that I had sent last month was not included in the materials the Department prepared for publication by the Commission. I have enclosed that letter in this email, and would respectfully ask that it be included in the packet that is prepared for the Commission's meeting in October.

Thank you and have a great weekend,

Josh



JOSH P. BRONES

*Strategic Director,
Wildlife Dynamics Program*

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From: Barr, Victoria [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, August 27, 2026 10:12
To: Josh Brones <jpbrones@caldeer.org>
Subject: RE: Proposed Modifications to Private Land Management Program

Thanks for your comments Josh.

Have a good day,

Victoria Barr (she/her)
SHARE and PLM Coordinator
Wildlife Branch
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244
[REDACTED]

From: Josh Brones <jpbrones@caldeer.org>
Sent: Wednesday, August 26, 2026 5:40 PM

To: Barr, Victoria

Subject: Proposed Modifications to Private Land Management Program

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

Hi Victoria,

Please find enclosed the perspective of the California Deer Association regarding the Department's intent to modify provisions of the PLM program.

Thank you for your important work in administering this invaluable program.

Regards,

Josh



JOSH P. BRONES

*Strategic Director,
Wildlife Dynamics Program*

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Dear Ms. Barr,

26-AUG-26

Thank you for working to understand the perspectives and concerns of landowners, enrollees, and other stakeholders regarding the Department's intent to modify multiple elements of the Private Land Management ("PLM") program. We regret that we were unable to participate in the meeting, but are grateful for the opportunity to provide comments directly to you in lieu of that participation.

California Deer Association ("CDA") is the largest non-governmental organization that is both California-based and big game-focused in our mission. In addition to the substantial habitat restoration and improvement projects that CDA performs with our state and federal agency partners, we take an active interest and role in advocating for similar efforts on private lands. Throughout our thirty-year history, CDA has been a vocal advocate for the PLM program. We recognize the unique opportunity the program affords both its enrollees and the Department to collaborate on improving the habitat California's deer depend on. We consider this program to be of vital importance to preserving, and ultimately improving, deer population, distribution, and resilience against native predators, disease, and various sources of anthropogenic pressure.

CDA is supportive of the Department's desire to establish more rigor to the enforcement of the program's expectations. We would ask that the Department establish a framework that institutes successive penalties for non-compliance, especially for incidents that are administrative in nature.

While CDA applauds the Department's desire to expand hunting opportunities, we are very concerned with the foreseeable chilling effect that some of the proposed changes would have on program participation; most notably, many of our members have earnestly indicated that a modification to the program that would obligate public access as a condition of participation would result in their abandonment of the program. The reasons are varied, but concerns most often cited involve the risk of liability or harm should an accident to, or by, the member of the public occur.

CDA has multiple concerns of a legal nature, as it is our understanding that any effort to obligate greater access to either Department staff or the public would run afoul of current California law. Regarding increased access by Department personnel for purposes of conducting "studies and surveys," there is no such statutory provision allowing for such activities, rendering them entirely voluntary by the enrollee. 14 CCR § 601(b)(6) provides for Department access explicitly for conducting inspections to ensure compliance with the terms of the program such as reviewing habitat improvement efforts. Wildlife officers additionally have express access rights during PLM hunting seasons under § 601(d)(3) explicitly for purposes of ensuring compliance with hunting regulations. In addition, Fish and Game Code § 857(a) states that, *"the status of a person as an employee, agent, or licensee of the department does not confer upon that person a special right or privilege to knowingly enter private land without the consent of the owner, a search warrant,*

or an inspection warrant.” Accordingly, CDA believes that California law is quite clear in expressly permitting Department access for purposes of enforcing compliance with both the terms of the PLM program and hunting regulations, but is equally clear in prohibiting the Department to obligate enrollees to allow the Department to conduct activities falling outside of enforcement.

Regarding the Department’s intent to obligate a limited degree of public hunting opportunity, FGC § 3401(a): explicitly states that PLM lands “*shall not be available for use by the general public without the consent of the landholders.*” Accordingly, it is our position that current enrollees could not mandated to open their property to the public nor could such an expectation be a qualifying criterion without modifying the law expressly by action of the California legislature and governor.

CDA remains a vocal advocate for the PLM program and an ardent partner of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. We are confident that the risk of significant decline in PLM program participation can be mitigated, and the certainty of violation of California law can be avoided, by assuming a posture of *motivating* rather than mandating greater access for the Department and the public. We would appreciate the opportunity to share our ideas as to how to incentivize greater access should the Department wish to engage in such a discussion. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Josh P. Brones

Strategic Director, Wildlife Dynamics Program
California Deer Association
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