

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION UPDATE

FEBRUARY 13, 2024

On January 19th, Governor Newsom announced that Mr. Darius Anderson had been appointed to the open seat on the California Fish and Game Commission. Mr. Anderson, of Kenwood, has been Founder and Owner of Platinum Advisors since 1998. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from George Washington University. Mr. Anderson was appointed to a 6-year term. His appointment requires Senate confirmation.

CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – February 2024 Meeting Agenda

The February 2024 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission is a two-day meeting scheduled for February 14th and 15th. The public can attend this meeting in person at the following location:

***Natural Resources Headquarters Building
Second Floor
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814***

Members of the public can also participate via webinar/teleconference. Visit www.fgc.ca.gov the day of the meeting to watch or listen. To provide public comment during the meeting, please join via zoom, or by telephone. For instructions on how to join via zoom or telephone, [click here](#).

Please note that the Commission has scheduled a field trip immediately following the Commission meeting on Wednesday, February 14th. The field trip will focus on archery and will be co-hosted by the Department of Fish and Wildlife Hunter Education Program and the California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association. There will be a brief presentation on archery, archery hunting, and safety. Following the presentation will be an opportunity for Commissioners and guests to participate in shooting targets with several experienced archery instructors to provide guidance as needed. All equipment will be provided. No personal / unauthorized archery equipment is allowed. Members of the public are welcome but must provide their own transportation. For instructions on how you can participate click [FGC Field Trip](#)

To view the full agenda, click [FGC – February 2024 Mtg Agenda](#)

All marine related items will be considered on the first day, while all wildlife and sport fish related topics will be considered on the second day.

All agenda items of interest and concern to CBH are highlighted below:

Day 1 – Wednesday, February 14, 2024 – 8:30 AM

Agenda Item 2 – Election of Commission President and Vice-President

Under this agenda item the Commissioners will elect their President and Vice-President for 2024. In 2023, Commissioner Eric Sklar served as President and Commissioner Erika Zavaleta served as Vice-President.

Among other things, the responsibilities of the Commission President include:

- *Chairing Commission meetings;*
- *Representing the Commission as a voting member of the Wildlife Conservation Board;*
- *Providing guidance to Commission staff;*
- *Serving as primary contact with Department of Fish and Wildlife Director;*
- *May be an ex-officio member of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission created by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act if there are any projects in California under consideration.*

In the absence of the President, the Commission Vice-President fulfills the duties of the President where permitted.

To review the Commission staff summary for agenda item 2 regarding election of Commission President and Vice-President, click [FGC Staff Summary – Elections](#)

Agenda Item 3 – Committee Assignments

The Commission has three standing committees authorized in statute:

- *Marine Resources Committee*
- *Tribal Committee*
- *Wildlife Resources Committee*

No more than two commissioners may serve on each committee, and there are no limits to how long a commissioner may serve on a committee. Each committee meets three times per year.

The Marine Resources Committee is charged with providing recommendations to the Commission regarding marine issues directed to it by the Commission; the Wildlife Resources Committee is similarly charged related to terrestrial and inland fisheries issues; and the Tribal Committee provides recommendations to the Commission relative to matters associated with California's Native American tribes and tribal communities.

Committee assignments are generally identified at the beginning of each year or when changes in the composition of the Commission warrant. Current committee assignments made in February 2023 are as follows:

- *Marine Resources Committee: Samantha Murray and Eric Sklar;*
- *Tribal Committee: Jacque Hostler-Carmesin;*
- *Wildlife Resources Committee: Erika Zavaleta;*

At this meeting, the Commission will consider and potentially approve any changes to committee assignments for 2024.

To review the Commission staff summary for agenda item 3 regarding committee assignments, click [FGC Staff Summary – Committee Assign](#)

Agenda Item 5 – Recreational Take of California Halibut

This item will serve to provide the Commission with the opportunity to consider adopting proposed amendments to regulations for California halibut recreational daily bag and possession limits.

In May 2023, the Commission adopted *emergency* California halibut regulation changes for the recreational fishery north of Point Sur. At their October 2023 meeting, the Commission re-adopted the emergency regulations for an additional 90 days.

Also at their October 2023 meeting, the Commission authorized publication of a notice for *regular* rulemaking to amend the bag and possession limit for recreational take of California halibut with two options:

- *Option 1: Reduce the bag limit in northern California only (north of Point Sur), consistent with current emergency regulations;*
- *Option 2: Reduce the bag limit in northern California and in southern California.*

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is recommending reducing the recreational bag and possession limit to two fish in both northern and southern California using Option 2. In recognition of significant public comments opposing a reduction in southern California, DFW suggests that, as an alternative, the Commission could consider adopting Option 1 and revisiting changes for the southern California fishery within the more comprehensive California halibut management review currently underway.

Meanwhile, Commission staff acknowledges public concerns and sees merit in maintaining the current bag and possession limits in southern California to allow for the more comprehensive California halibut management review to proceed before making changes to regulations for the recreational fishery in southern California.

This item will include a detailed presentation by Kristine Lesyna, DFW Environmental Scientist for the Marine Region. Ms. Lesyna's presentation will include an update on emergency regulation impact, a thorough overview of the northern California and southern California halibut fishery and management, information on outreach efforts, and conclude with DFW's recommendations.

Currently, daily bag and possession limits are as follows:

- *Emergency two fish bag (previously three) north of Point Sur, Monterey County;*
- *Five fish bag south of Point Sur, Monterey County.*

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 5 regarding recreational take of California halibut, including Ms. Lesyna's presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – California Halibut](#)

Day 2 – Thursday, February 15, 2024 – 8:30 AM

CONSENT ITEM

Agenda Item 15 – White Sturgeon

This item will serve as an opportunity for the Commission to consider and possibly approve a DFW request for a 30-day extension to review the petition to list white sturgeon as a threatened or endangered species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

On November 29, 2023, the Commission received a petition from San Francisco Baykeeper, the Bay Institute, Restore the Delta, and the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance to list white sturgeon as threatened under CESA. On December 6, 2023, Commission staff transmitted the petition to DFW for review. The California Fish and Game Code requires that DFW evaluate the petition and submit a written evaluation with a recommendation to the Commission within 90 days of receiving the petition, but allows DFW to request an extension of up to 30 days to complete the evaluation.

Should the Commission approve DFW's request for a 30-day extension under this item, the new due date for DFW's evaluation would change to April 5, 2024.

Commission staff is recommending that DFW's request for that 30-day extension be approved by the Commission.

To review the petition from San Francisco Baykeeper, the Bay Institute, Restore the Delta, and the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance to list white sturgeon as threatened under CESA click [White Sturgeon Petition](#)

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 15 regarding the possible listing of white sturgeon under CESA, click [FGC Staff Summary – White Sturgeon](#)

CONSENT ITEM

Agenda Item 17 – Exotic Game Mammals and Wild Pig Validation

At its October 2023 meeting, the Commission authorized publication of a notice of its intent to amend regulations related to exotic game mammals and wild pig validations. At their December 2023 meeting, the item was again on the agenda for discussion. This item is to serve as the adoption hearing on DFW's proposed regulations for exotic game mammals and wild pig validations.

In September 2022, Governor Newsom signed SB 856 which made changes to the California Fish and Game Code regarding wild pigs, such as definitions, licensing, take, captive hunting preserves, and the capture, possession, and release of wild pigs. The intent of the law is to give the public and DFW more tools to manage wild pigs and the damage pigs cause to private property and the environment.

At WRC's May and September 2023 meetings, DFW made presentations describing key elements of the statutory changes resulting from SB 856 and highlighting potential changes to regulations necessary to implement the bill.

Consistent with the intent and statutory changes of SB 856, DFW is recommending multiple regulations changes, including:

- *Establishing baseline regulations for exotic game mammals, including definitions, shooting hours, authorized take methods, and prohibitions on feeding;*
- *Reclassifying wild pig as an exotic game mammal;*
- *Striking wild pig from various sections associated with big game mammals;*
- *Adding the exotic game mammal classification to general hunting regulations and establishing a wild pig validation and reporting framework;*
- *Extending the validity of depredation permits for wild pig from one year to five years;*
- *Replacing tags with a validation for the take of wild pigs.*

Due to general public support and minimal public comment on this item at previous Commission meetings, this item has been placed on consent for this meeting.

To review the Commission staff summary for agenda item 17 regarding exotic game mammals and wild pig validation, click [FGC Staff Summary – Wild Pigs](#)

Agenda Item 18 – Central Valley Sport Fishing

This item will provide the Commission opportunity to consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend 2024 Central Valley salmon sport fishing regulations for the Sacramento, Feather, Mokelumne and Lower American Rivers. The Commission adopts Central Valley sport fishing regulations on an annual basis to align state regulations with federal fishery management goals set by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC).

At this initial meeting, the DFW will propose a range of bag and possession limits for Sacramento River fall-run Chinook salmon (SRFC) in the American, Feather, Mokelumne, and Sacramento rivers to encompass possible PFMC 2024 recommendations for SRFC stocks. Specific bag and possession limits for Central Valley fall-run Chinook salmon will not be adopted by the Commission until after the PFMC has reviewed the status of West Coast salmon stocks and adopts their final recommendations in April 2024.

DFW Fisheries Branch Program Manager Jonathan Nelson will open this item with a presentation which will include: mapping of the four Central Valley rivers in question; mapping of the stretches of those rivers that have special regulations; and a review of the 2023 Central Valley salmon regulations (during which all four rivers were closed to the take and possession of Chinook Salmon).

Mr. Nelson will then note that the range of regulatory options DFW is considering for Central Valley salmon in 2024 include:

2024 Regulatory Options

- *Option 1: Any Size Chinook Salmon Fishery: ➤ Allow the take of up 0-4 salmon of any size per day, 0-12 in possession;*
- *Option 2: Adult and Grilse Fishery: ➤ 0-4 bag limit, 0-12 possession limit. Could limit number of adults, with grilse making up the remainder;*
- *Option 3: Grilse-only Chinook Salmon fishery ➤ Allow for a grilse-only salmon fishery. 0-4 bag limit, 0-12 possession limit;*
- *Option 4: Closed to the take and possession of Chinook salmon.*

Note: Options 1-4 can be used independently or in combination for the same water body., as specified by river reach(es).

DFW will recommend specific changes to 2024 Central Valley salmon sport fishing regulations at the Commission's April 2024 meeting, following receiving the PFMC's recommendation in early April. The adoption hearing for 2024 Central Valley salmon sport fishing regulations will be held via teleconference on May 15, 2024.

2024 Central Valley salmon sport fishing regulations will go into effect July 16, 2024.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 18 regarding 2024 Central Valley salmon sport fishing regulations, including Mr. Nelson's presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2024 Central Valley Salmon](#)

Agenda Item 19 – Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing

This item will provide the Commission opportunity to consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend 2024 Klamath River Basin salmon regulations. As with Central Valley salmon sport fishing regulations, the Commission adopts Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon (KRFC) sport fishing regulations on an annual basis to align state regulations with federal fishery management goals set by the PFMC.

As with SRFC, at this initial meeting, the DFW will propose a range of bag and possession limits for KRFC to encompass possible PFMC 2024 recommendations for KRFC stocks. Specific bag and possession limits for KRFC will not be adopted by the Commission until after the PFMC has reviewed the status of West Coast salmon stocks and adopted their recommendations in April 2024.

The item will also be opened with a presentation by DFW Fisheries Branch Chief Jonathan Nelson. Mr. Nelson's presentation will include: management of KRFC in the Klamath Basin; mapping of Klamath River Basin sub-quota areas; and a review of 2023 Klamath River Basin (during which the Klamath Basin was closed to the take and possession of KRFC).

Mr. Nelson will then note that the range of regulatory options DFW is recommending for KRFC the Klamath River Basin in 2024 are as follows:

- *Klamath Basin Quota Range: 0 – 67,600 fish > 20 – 24 Inches;*
- *Bag Limit Range: 0 – 4 fish > 20 – 24 Inches;*
- *Possession limit range: 0 – 12 fish > 20 – 24 Inches;*
- *Season: August 15 – December 31 (Klamath River);*
- *Season: September 1 – December 31 (Trinity River);*
- *Closed to the take and possession of KRFC.*

Similar to their proposal for Central Valley salmon, the broad scope of the regulatory options being brought forth by DFW would allow flexibility in developing the final 2024 regulations for KRFC. As noted above, such flexibility is necessary to allow the Commission to quickly adopt regulations given the timing of the PFMC process.

DFW will recommend specific changes to 2024 Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon sport fishing regulations at the Commission's April 2024 meeting, following receiving the PFMC's recommendation in early April. The adoption hearing for 2024 Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon sport fishing regulations will be held via teleconference on May 15, 2024.

2024 Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon sport fishing regulations will go into effect August 15, 2024.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda Item 19 regarding 2024 Klamath River Basin sport fishing regulations, including Mr. Nelson's presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2024 Klamath River Sport Fish](#)

Agenda Item 20 – Waterfowl Hunting

This item will serve as the second, or "discussion" hearing on changes to waterfowl regulations DFW is proposing for the 2024/2025 waterfowl season.

Because waterfowl are migratory and cross international and state boundaries, DFW recommendations must stay within the sideboards of a proposed "federal framework". The federal framework describes the earliest dates that waterfowl hunting seasons may open, the maximum number of days hunting can occur, the latest dates that hunting seasons may close, and the maximum daily bag limit. The proposed federal frameworks for 2024/2025 hunting seasons were approved by the four regional flyway councils in August 2023 and by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Regulation Committee in October 2023. Federally-proposed season frameworks are typically published in the Federal Register by mid-December and final frameworks published by late February of the following year.

This item was brought forward by DFW for consideration of authorization of notice at the Commission’s December 2023 meeting in San Diego. At that meeting, DFW Waterfowl Coordinator Melanie Weaver provided a presentation which began by noting that the proposed federal frameworks for the 2024/2025 waterfowl season include a liberal package for ducks, including 107-day seasons, a seven-bird bag for most species, and no change from the 2023/2024 season for geese.

At the December 2023 meeting, Ms. Weaver provided a presentation which noted that DFW was recommending the below significant changes for the 2024/2025 waterfowl season:

- *Decreasing the duck season length from 103 to 98 days for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone, the Southern California Zone, and the Balance of State Zone;*
- *Decreasing the goose season length from 103 to 98 days for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone and the Southern California Zone, and from 100 to 98 for the Balance of State Zone;*
- *Allowing up to five days of “falconry-only” season for the San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones.*

Note that the reduction in days from 103 to 98 for most zones is due to how the calendar will fall in the 2024/2025 season.

The proposed regulations also include an option that would allow geese to be taken during the Veterans and Active Military Personnel (VAMP) waterfowl hunting days for the Balance of State Zone.

Final adoption of 2024/2025 waterfowl hunting regulations will take place at the Commission’s April 2024 meeting in San Jose.

Our lobbyist and partner will continue to work closely with DFW as their 2024/2025 waterfowl hunting proposal works its way through the regulatory process to ensure that the maximum scientifically justifiable waterfowl hunting opportunity is made available for the 2024/2025 season in all five California waterfowl hunting zones.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 20 regarding 2024/2025 waterfowl regulations, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2024/2025 Waterfowl](#)

Agenda Item 21 – Mammal Hunting

This item will serve as the second, or “discussion” hearing on changes DFW is proposing to 2024 mammal hunting regulations.

At the Commission’s December 2023 meeting, DFW staff presented proposed regulatory changes for 2024 for bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, elk, deer, elk cooperative hunts, and preference points. DFW’s proposed changes to 2024 mammal hunting regulations include the following:

Nelson Bighorn Sheep

Modify tag quotas in four zones (see red type below), with potential for changes in additional zones as data analysis is completed:

<u><i>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</i></u>	<u><i>2023/24 Season Allocation</i></u>	<u><i>2024/2025 Proposal</i></u>
<i>Zone 1 – Marble/Clipper Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0-5</i>
<i>Zone 2 – Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0-2</i>
<i>Zone 3 – Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0-4</i>

Zone 4 – Orocochia Mountains	1	0-2
Zone 5 – San Gorgonio Wilderness	0	0-3
Zone 6 – Sheep Hole Mountains	0	0-2
Zone 7 – White Mountains	6	0-6
Zone 8 – South Bristol Mountains	2	0-3
Zone 9 – Cady Mountains	2	0-4
Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	6	0-6
Open Zone Fund-Raising Tag	1	0-1
Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains Fund-Raising Tag	0	0-1
Cady Mountains Fund-Raising Tag	1	0-1
<i>Total sheep tag allocations:</i>	<hr/> 25	<hr/> 0-40

Pronghorn Antelope

Modify tag quotas in some zones due to:

- Downward population trend, poor productivity, recent harsh winter conditions;
- Declines in hunter harvest success and age-at-harvest in Likely Tables (Zone 3) and Big Valley (Zone 5) over last 5 years;
- Recommend reducing tags in Zones 3 & 5; (See red type below)
- Final recommendations pending winter survey results.

Proposed Pronghorn Antelope tag ranges are as follows:

<u>Hunt Code</u>	<u>Hunt Zone Description</u>	<u>2023 Approved</u>	<u>2024 Proposed</u>	<u>Potential Net Change</u>
710	Zone 1 - Mount Dome General – Buck	2	0-5	-2, +3
720	Zone 2 - Clear Lake General – Buck	15	5-15	-10, +0
728	Zone 2 - Clear Lake Archery – Buck	1	1	-0, +0
730	Zone 3 - Likely Tables General - Buck - Period 1	25	15-25	-10, +0
732	Zone 3 - Likely Tables General - Buck - Period 2	25	10-25	-15, +0
738	Zone 3 - Likely Tables Archery - Buck	15	15	-0, +0
734	Zone 3 - Likely Tables Apprentice - Either-sex	5	5	-0, +0
740	Zone 4 - Lassen General - Buck - Period 1	35	25-50	-10, +15
742	Zone 4 - Lassen General - Buck - Period 2	35	25-50	-10, +15
745	Zone 4 - Lassen Archery - Buck	5	5	-0, +0
790	Zone 4 - Lassen Apprentice - Either-sex	5	5	-0, +0
750	Zone 5 - Big Valley General - Buck	20	5-20	-15, +0
755	Zone 5 - Big Valley Archery - Buck	1	1	-0, +0
780	Zone 5 - Big Valley Apprentice - Either-sex	1	1	-0, +0
760	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley General - Buck	10	10-15	-0, +5
765	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley Archery - Buck	1	1	-0, +0
766	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley Apprentice - Either-sex	4	4	-0, +0
	<i>Total</i>	<hr/> 205	<hr/> 133-243	<hr/> -72, +38

Elk

DFW’s proposed 2024 regulation changes for elk are largely covered in the below subject areas:

- *Modify hunt tag quotas;*
- *Increase SHARE tag allocations;*
- *Address elk “conflict areas”;*
- *Cooperative Elk Area Landowner Tags;*
- *Address concerns regarding need for additional new “archery only” tags.*

Regarding the general public draw, DFW is recommending modifying elk tag allocations in the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area by adding 4 to 8 bull tags across three hunt periods.

DFW has also identified several elk hunt zones with chronic, elevated human-elk conflict where elk almost exclusively occupy private property. These “conflict areas” include:

- *Northwestern*
- *Siskiyou*
- *Mendocino*
- *Tehachapi*

Although regulated hunter harvest is DFW’s preferred method for reducing elk populations in these conflict areas, gaining hunter access to private property via signing landowners up for the Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Program has proven to be difficult.

In addition to trying to enroll landowners in SHARE, DFW is also working to address elk problems in conflict areas via other means. These include site consultation visits, assisting with exclusionary methods (such as fencing), and habitat restoration projects to promote elk moving into desirable areas (such as public lands).

Further, to reduce elk populations in these conflict areas, DFW is proposing the following changes to the Cooperative Elk Area Landowner (LO) Tags program:

- *Reduce qualifying landowner criteria from 640 acres to 60 acres;*
- *Increase antlerless tag distribution relative to public tags from 20% to up to 100%*
- *Extend the landowner season through November;*
- *Increase SHARE tags in tandem to also offer more public hunt opportunity on private property.*

For the past several months, our partner and lobbyist, the *California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association (CBHSAA)*, and the *Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF)* have been meeting with DFW in an effort to increase public hunting opportunity on both public and private lands via: adding general draw tags; offering to assist DFW with enrolling new landowners into SHARE by way of hosting “townhall” meetings and other outreach activities; adding “archery only” (AO) tags within “conflict zones” where firearms may not be appropriate; and possibly adding additional general draw AO tags and hunt periods in the Tehachapi hunt zone, Marble Mountains, San Luis Reservoir and elsewhere. Our lobbyist, *CBHSAA*, and *RMEF* will continue to work hard to secure additional elk hunting opportunities in 2024 prior to final adoption of the 2024 mammal regulations at the Commission’s April 2024 meeting.

Deer

DFW’s proposed changes to 2024 deer hunting regulations include the below changes to the current preference point system:

- *Modify hunting regulations to make hunting opportunities more equitable by only allowing individual party members to return tags if their points are less than or equal to the party's point average. If a party member's points are greater than the party's average and that party member wishes to have their points reinstated, all party members must return their tags for all to have points reinstated;*
- *Require junior hunters to return all first-choice tags to be eligible for preference points reinstatement;*
- *Require the carcass portion of tag be included with harvest report for point reinstatement.*

DFW is also proposing some changes to Cooperative Deer Hunting Area regulations. Currently, DFW allows private landowners who own at least 640 acres to be eligible to submit a single application for one deer tag for themselves and one deer tag for an immediate family member. However, because landowner tags as a percentage of public quota in zones X3a, X5a, and X5b are two to three times that of all other zones, DFW is recommending that the number of available Cooperative Deer Hunting Area tags per application be reduced from two to one in those zones. Further, DFW is proposing to clarify application instructions and provide a definition of "immediate family member".

Final adoption of the 2024 mammal hunting regulations will take place at the Commission's meeting in the San Jose on April 18, 2024.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 21 regarding 2024 mammal hunting regulations, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2024 Mammal](#)

Agenda Item 22 – Readoption of White Sturgeon Emergency Regulation

This item was intended for the Commission to consider adopting a 90-day extension of emergency regulations concerning recreational take of white sturgeon to support recovery populations and to track fishing pressure and success.

Because this item is not yet ready for Commission consideration, staff is recommending continuing this item to the April 2024 Commission meeting.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 22 regarding readoption of the white sturgeon emergency regulation, click [FGC Staff Summary – White Sturgeon Reg Extend](#)

Agenda Item 24 – Department Lands

This agenda item is to serve as the adoption hearing on DFW's proposal to amend several regulations for lands owned or managed by DFW.

At the October 2023 Commission meeting, DFW brought forward for Commission consideration a variety of proposed amendments to regulations which address public use of lands owned or managed by the Department. At that meeting, the Commission approved publication of notice of DFW's proposed changes, and also granted authority to Commission staff to make modifications to ensure the proposed regulations meet all required legal standards.

Following Commission staff input, the proposed changes to the regulations will:

- *Prohibit DFW use of neonicotinoid pesticides on DFW lands;*
- *Improve the clarity and consistency of the regulations that govern public use of lands owned and/or managed by DFW;*
- *Designate lands DFW has acquired as an ecological reserve or a wildlife area;*

- *Make site-specific regulation changes for certain properties to improve public safety, manage recreational opportunities, provide resource protection, and manage staff resources;*
- *Specify that DFW may issue permits for various public uses and identifies criteria under which the DFW shall determine permit specifications.*

In addition to the above, the recommendations DFW brought forth at the October 2023 Commission meeting included:

- *Setting a 3:00 p.m. deadline for waterfowl and pheasant season hunters to obtain their entry permit;*
- *Prohibiting electric bicycles on all lands except where posted as allowed;*
- *Adding drones and other unmanned aircraft to the list of devices prohibited without a Special Use Permit issued by DFW;*
- *Prohibiting woodcutting on all DFW lands;*
- *Adding El Dorado Wildlife Area, in El Dorado County, acquired to protect the habitat in the Upper Cosumnes River watershed. This property is located a few miles east of Rancho Murieta near the boundaries of Sacramento and Amador counties;*
- *Amending site-specific regulations regarding permitted uses on wildlife areas affecting dog training and dog trials, bicycles, off-highway vehicles, boats, horse and pack stock, camping, fires, closure and restriction, hunt requirements, firearms, species, and reservations;*
- *Adding Peace Valley Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles County. This property is located in the northwest corner of Los Angeles County, adjacent to Interstate 5, about five miles south of Gorman;*
- *Amending site-specific regulations regarding permitted uses on ecological reserves affecting fishing, swimming, boating, bicycles, horse and pack stock, closures and restrictions, hunting opportunities and restrictions.*

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 24 regarding Department Lands, including some changes made by DFW to their initial proposal and extensive detail on the full package of recommendations, click [FGC Staff Summary – Department Lands](#)

Agenda Item 25 – Permits and Draws for Special Hunts

This item was intended for the Commission to consider approving sufficiently-related changes to the regulations adopted by the Commission at their August 2023 meeting regarding special hunt permit issuance and drawings in the DFW Automated License Data System.

Because this item is not yet ready for Commission consideration, staff is recommending continuing this item to the April 2024 Commission meeting.

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 25 regarding permits and draws for special hunts, click [FGC Staff Summary – Special Hunts Permits and Draws](#)

Agenda Item 27 – Regulation Change Petitions (Wildlife and Inland Fisheries)

(A) New Petitions

(B) Previously Received Petitions

Under this item the Commission will receive new regulation change petitions and act on regulation change petitions received from the public at previous meetings.

(A) Receipt of New Petitions for Regulation Change

Under Item (A) petitions for regulation submitted by the public by the comment deadline or by the supplemental comment deadline are to be received at this Commission meeting. The Commission cannot

discuss or act on any petitions being received, other than to schedule them for consideration at a future meetings.

At this meeting, the Commission will not receive any new petitions of interest.

(B) Action on Previously Received Petitions for Regulation Change

Under Item (B) petitions received at the previous meeting are scheduled for Commission consideration. Petitions may be denied, granted, or referred to a committee, staff, or DFW for further evaluation or information-gathering. Petitions that are referred are scheduled for Commission action once the evaluation is completed and a recommendation made.

At this meeting, the Commission will act on two petitions of interest:

- I. *Petition 2018-016(a): Request to remove Hope Valley Wildlife Area from the DFW Lands Pass Program;*
- II. *Petition 2023-13: Clarify regulatory language regarding the use of traps for fur bearing mammals, including trap types, and disposition of animals trapped;*

I. Petition 2018-016(a): Submitted to the Commission in November 2018 by the Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Petition 2018-016 requested that the Hope Valley Wildlife Area be removed from the DFW Lands Pass Program to eliminate the need for visitors to purchase a Lands Pass for entry to the property. The petition cited several reasons for the request, including a low population in the region and dependency on tourism for the local economy, limited cell phone service for purchasing passes, confusing property boundaries adjacent to federal lands, and a desire to maintain all access areas for locals and visitors to enjoy free of any charges except for hunting and fishing licenses.

Petition 2018-016(a) was received by the Commission at their December 2018 meeting and referred to DFW for review and recommendation at the February 2019 Commission meeting.

Based on the DFW recommendation, Commission staff is recommending that Petition 2018-016(a) be denied.

II. Petition 2023-13: Submitted by a private individual, Petition 2023-13 requests that regulatory language be clarified and revised regarding the use of traps including type of traps, and disposition of animals trapped.

Commission staff is recommending that Petition 2023-013 be referred to DFW for review and recommendation.

To view the Commission staff summary on agenda item 27, including full detail on each of the above petitions and rational behind DFW/Commission staff recommendations, click [FGC Staff Summary – Petitions for Regulatory Change](#)

Agenda Item 29 – Committee and Department Reports
(B) Wildlife Resources Committee

Because the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) serves as a subcommittee of the Commission, its topic areas, meeting agendas and Work Plan are subject to Commission approval.

Commission staff Wildlife Advisor Ari Cornman should open this item by providing the Commission with a summary of the WRC meeting held on January 16, 2024, including the below topics and discussion:

- *White Sturgeon Regular Rulemaking:* DFW proposed a limited-entry harvest tag system with a set number of tags for regular rulemaking. Guides and sturgeon anglers proposed an alternate tag system with an unlimited number of tags and close monitoring of harvest levels. Discussion considered the status of white sturgeon populations and economic losses from businesses that support the recreational sturgeon fishery. DFW underscored the importance of protecting spawning areas to protect white sturgeon populations in the long-term. Some stakeholders voiced reservations about the reliability of data presented by DFW and whether population declines are real.

WRC Chair Commissioner Zavaleta explained the range of options, from closure through catch-and-release, to the tag system proposals, to the current emergency regulations. Commissioner Zavaleta expressed concerns about the status of white sturgeon and requested that DFW include in the proposal it presents to the Commission an option for catch-and-release fishing only.

- *Wildlife Rehabilitation:* Discussions examined progress to date in developing recommended changes to regulations and the appropriate amount of time for stakeholders to work with DFW to finalize a proposal. The current proposal includes incorporating a new rehabilitation manual specific to California and updating documents, animal care standards, permitting requirements, administrative requirements, and more. General stakeholder sentiment seemed to be that good progress had been made, but more time is needed to work out a few remaining issues. Commissioner Zavaleta stressed the importance of these regulations and the desire for progress, but also wanted to provide some more time both for stakeholder engagement and document production by staff, suggesting that two more months should be sufficient since the wildlife rehabilitation community will be consumed with the upcoming “baby season” by April.
- *Inland Sport Fishing:* DFW presented updates to its proposal for inland sport fishing regulation changes and a petition for regulation change. There was no discussion.
- *Plastic Pollution from Shotgun Wads:* WRC received an introductory presentation. Our partner and lobbyist and some other stakeholders expressed concerns about any future regulations, the problem was acknowledged; it was also suggested there are much more significant contributors of plastic to waterways that also need attention. WRC and some participants expressed a desire to continue discussions.
- *Waterfowl Hunting in Southampton Bay:* The city manager for the city of Benicia offered suggestions for regulatory changes to address noise issues. Our partner and lobbyist and other meeting participants discussed the proposed changes, with the general sentiment being that some showed promise, while others appeared to be impractical. In particular, a maximum gauge shotgun and a later start time seemed to have potential. Commission staff indicated that suggestions regarding law enforcement may be operational decisions on the part of DFW and likely inappropriate for a regulation. We noted that holidays were especially important hunting days, so prohibiting hunting on those days might disproportionately restrict hunters. Commission staff will work with DFW to continue engaging stakeholders in a conversation in preparation for a May WRC meeting discussion about a potential recommendation to the Commission.

Due to a lack of time, a discussion regarding the take of nongame mammals was continued to the next meeting.

A recording of the WRC meeting will be posted to the [Commission's YouTube channel](#) in the near future.

Mr. Cornman should then state that WRC developed the three following recommendations for Commission consideration at this meeting:

- 1) *The Commission support a future regular rulemaking regarding white sturgeon, with options for both DFW's recommendation and catch-and-release;*
- 2) *The Commission support future rulemaking regarding wildlife rehabilitation, and to schedule a notice hearing for the June 2024 Commission meeting;*
- 3) *The Commission support a future rulemaking regarding inland sport fishing, based on DFW's proposal.*

Mr. Cornman should then state that topics that have been referred from the Commission to WRC are displayed in a Work Plan that is provided in the Commission meeting binder for scheduling and tracking. Mr. Cornman should then close by noting that WRC and staff have no recommendations for new topics for WRC discussion.

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 29(B) regarding the WRC, including full detail on the WRC Work Plan, click [FGC Staff Summary – WRC](#)

CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – December 2023 Meeting Recap

The December 2023 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission was a two-day meeting held on December 13th and 14th in San Diego. All wildlife and sport fish related topics were considered on the first day, and all marine related items were considered on the second day. As such, this *Report* focuses on day one – December 13th.

To view the full agenda, click [FGC – December 2023 Mtg Agenda](#)

Wednesday, December 13, 2023 – 8:30 AM

The December 13, 2023 meeting of the Commission was gaveled open by Commission President Eric Sklar with Commissioners Jacque Hostler-Carmesin and Commissioner Erika Zavaleta also present. Commissioner Samantha Murray was absent.

All agenda items of interest and concern to CBH are highlighted below:

Agenda Item 3 – Waterfowl Hunting

This item served to provide the Commission with the opportunity to consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend waterfowl hunting regulations for the 2024/2025 waterfowl seasons. Under this item, DFW brought forward the preliminary changes to waterfowl regulations they were recommending for the 2024/2025 waterfowl season. (*For more detail on DFW's recommended regulation changes for the 2024/2025 waterfowl season see agenda item 20 of the February 15, 2024 Commission meeting above*)

This item was kicked off with a presentation by DFW Waterfowl Coordinator Melanie Weaver who began by noting that the proposed federal frameworks for the 2024/2025 waterfowl season include a liberal package for ducks of 107-day seasons, a seven-bird bag for most species, and no change for geese. Ms. Weaver also stated that DFW is recommending that the traditional season opening dates and the January 31st closure in most zones be maintained.

Ms. Weaver then noted that DFW is recommending the below significant changes for the 2024/2025 waterfowl season:

- *Decreasing the duck season length from 103 to 98 days for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone, the Southern California Zone, and the Balance of State Zone;*

- *Decreasing the goose season length from 103 to 98 days for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone and the Southern California Zone, and from 100 to 98 for the Balance of State Zone;*
- *Allowing up to five days of “falconry-only” season for the San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones.*

Ms. Weaver then commented that the reduction in days from 103 to 98 for most zones was due to calendar progression.

Ms. Weaver then noted that the proposed regulations also included an option that would move the late depredation goose hunting season up so that it overlapped with the Veterans and Active Military Personnel (VAMP) weekend – which would allow veterans to also take geese in the Balance of State Zone. However, she then stated that, at this time, the DFW recommendation was to keep the late depredation goose season where it was.

Because this was the “notice” hearing, DFW only brought forward ranges for possible opening and closing season dates and bag limits.

Following Ms. Weaver’s presentation, our partner and lobbyist was pleased to testify on behalf of our waterfowl and falconry clients. We began by thanking DFW staff for meeting with us prior to this meeting to try to reach agreement on all the recommendations being brought forth by DFW today. We then thanked the Department for taking full advantage of the liberal federal frameworks and stated our full support for the option of moving the late goose season up to overlap the VAMP weekend to allow veterans to also shoot geese. This move would also allow non-veterans who are taking veterans out in the field to be able to shoot geese during the VAMP weekend. We also thanked DFW for recommending that the remaining five available duck hunting days be allocated to a “falconry only” season.

Following public comment, the Commission voted unanimously to authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend the 2024/2025 waterfowl hunting regulations as recommended by DFW.

Further discussion on the 2024/2025 waterfowl package will take place at the Commission’s meeting in Sacramento on February 15, 2024, with final adoption taking place at the Commission’s meeting in the San Jose on April 18, 2024.

Our lobbyist will continue to work closely with DFW as their 2024/2025 waterfowl hunting proposal works its way through the regulatory process to ensure that the maximum scientifically justifiable waterfowl hunting opportunity is made available for the 2024/2025 season in all five California waterfowl hunting zones.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 3 regarding 2024/2025 waterfowl regulations, including Ms. Weaver’s presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2024/2025 Waterfowl](#)

Agenda Item 4 – Mammal Hunting

This item served to provide the Commission with the opportunity to consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend big game hunting regulations for the 2024 seasons. Because the rulemaking process must be initiated prior to DFW’s collection and analysis of the most recent big game species survey data, most of the proposals brought forward at this time contained ranges for tag amounts that will have to be refined as the rulemaking process progresses. Currently, DFW expects data collection and analysis to be complete in March 2024. Final tag quota recommendations for each species will be brought forward at the Commission’s April 2024 “adoption” hearing on 2024 mammal hunting regulations.

This item opened with a presentation provided by DFW staff on proposed changes to hunting regulations DFW is bringing forward for 2024 seasons for Nelson bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, elk, and deer. *(For full detail on DFW's recommended regulation changes for 2024 mammal hunting of all big game species – including tag quota ranges – please see agenda item 21 of the February 15, 2024 Commission meeting above)*

First up was Ms. Regina Vu, DFW Wildlife Regulations Coordinator, who covered Nelson bighorn sheep. Ms. Vu noted that for the 2024 season, DFW was proposing:

- *Modifying tag quotas;*
- *Making adjustments in four zones;*
- *Making potential changes in additional zones as data analysis is completed.*

(For greater detail on bighorn sheep tag quota ranges for the 2024 season in all hunt zones, please see agenda item 21 of the February 15, 2024 Commission meeting above)

Next up was Dr. Tom Batter, DFW Elk and Pronghorn Program Coordinator. Mr. Batter began with a presentation on DFW's preliminary recommendations for the 2024 pronghorn antelope season. Dr. Batter stated that 2024 pronghorn tag quotas would be modified in some zones due to:

- *Downward population trend, poor productivity, recent harsh winter conditions;*
- *Declines in hunter harvest success and age-at-harvest in Likely Tables (Zone 3) and Big Valley (Zone 5) over last 5 years;*
- *Recommend reducing tags in Zones 3 & 5;*
- *Final recommendations pending winter survey results.*

Dr. Batter then provided the 2024 pronghorn tag quota ranges currently being brought forward by DFW. *(For full detail on pronghorn antelope tag quota ranges for the 2024 season in all hunt zones, please see agenda item 21 of the February 15, 2024 Commission meeting above)*

Moving on, Dr. Batter provided a very detailed presentation on DFW's proposed 2024 regulation changes for elk, noting that for 2024 DFW was focusing on the below subject areas:

- *Modification of hunting tag quotas;*
- *Increasing SHARE tag allocations;*
- *Strategies for addressing elk "conflict areas";*
- *Cooperative Elk Area Landowner Tags;*
- *Addressing concerns regarding need for additional new "archery only" tags.*

Regarding the general public draw, Dr. Batter stated that DFW was recommending modifying elk tag allocations in the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area by adding 4 to 8 bull tags across three hunt periods.

Specifically in regard to the elk "conflict areas", Dr. Batter stated that DFW had identified four elk hunt zones with chronic, elevated human-elk conflict where elk almost exclusively occupy private property. He noted that these areas include:

- *Northwestern*
- *Siskiyou*
- *Mendocino*
- *Tehachapi*

Dr. Batter stated that, although regulated hunter harvest is the preferred method for reducing elk populations in these conflict areas, gaining hunter access to private property via the Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Program has proved problematic. As such, DFW is also working to address elk problems via other means, including site consultation visits, assisting with exclusionary methods (such as fencing), and habitat restoration projects to promote elk moving into desirable areas (such as public lands). Dr. Batter then went into some considerable detail on a variety of strategies DFW was considering to increase elk harvest in conflict areas.

For the past several months, our partner and lobbyist has been working closely with the *CBHSAA* and *RMEF* to secure additional “archery only” (AO) elk tags in 2024 and beyond. Our lobbyist had also provided substantial comments during the September 2023 WRC meeting regarding the need for DFW to increase elk archery hunting opportunity. In response to these efforts, Dr. Batter concluded his presentation on elk by noting that AO tags as a component of new Landowner/SHARE properties within “conflict zones” may offer an advantage where firearms are not appropriate. Dr. Batter also stated that there was the potential to add 10 to 30 general draw AO tags and hunt period(s) to the Tehachapi hunt zone, and that other zones which may provide addition AO opportunity include Marble Mountains and San Luis Reservoir. *(For more detail on proposed elk regulations for the 2024 season, please see agenda item 21 of the February 15, 2024 Commission meeting above)*

Mr. Brian Leo, DFW Deer Program Coordinator, then stepped up to present DFW’s proposed changes to 2024 deer hunting regulations. Mr. Leo began his presentation by stating that DFW was considering the following three changes to the current preference point system:

- *Modify hunting regulations to make hunting opportunities more equitable by only allowing individual party members to return tags if their points are less than or equal to the party’s point average. If a party member’s points are greater than the party’s average and wishes to have their points reinstated, all party members must return their tags for all to have points reinstated;*
- *Require junior hunters to return all first-choice tags to be eligible for preference points reinstatement;*
- *Require the carcass portion of tag be included with harvest report for point reinstatement.*

Mr. Leo then stated that DFW is also proposing some changes to Cooperative Deer Hunting Area regulations. Mr. Leo noted that the purpose of the program is to encourage enhancement of deer habitat by allowing private landowners who own at least 640 acres to be eligible to submit a single application for one deer tag for themselves and one deer tag for an immediate family member.

However, because landowner tags as a percentage of public quota in zones X3a, X5a, and X5b are two to three times that of all other zones, DFW is recommending that the number of available Cooperative Deer Hunting Area tags per application be reduced from two to one in those zones. Further, DFW is proposing to clarify application instructions and provide a definition of “immediate family member”. *(For more detail on proposed deer regulations for the 2024 season, please see agenda item 21 of the February 15, 2024 Commission meeting above)*

Following the DFW presentation, our partner and lobbyist was pleased to testify on behalf of *RMEF*, *CBHSAA*, the *California Deer Association*, and the *California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation* thanking DFW staff for coordinating closely with us as they pulled together their initial 2024 season recommendations that were brought forth today. We again strongly recommended that DFW and the Commission consider adding additional AO tags. We then closed by thanking DFW for their efforts to provide the maximum big game hunting opportunity as supported by the best available science.

Following public comment, and some comments from the dais, the Commission voted unanimously to authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend the 2024 mammal hunting regulations as recommended by DFW.

Further discussion on the 2024 mammal hunting regulations will take place at the Commission's meeting in Sacramento on February 15, 2024, with final adoption taking place at the Commission's meeting in the San Jose on April 18, 2024.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 4 regarding 2024 mammal hunting regulations – including the DFW staff presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2024 Mammal](#)

Agenda Item 6 – Department Lands

This agenda item served as the second or “discussion” hearing on DFW’s proposal to amend several regulations for lands owned or managed by DFW.

Because this was the “discussion” hearing, there was no formal presentation by DFW on this topic, nor any comments from DFW staff in the room. Instead, after some brief opening comments by Commission staff Wildlife Advisor Ari Cornman, the floor was opened up for public testimony. Following some very brief public testimony, the item was brought to a close. No Commission action was required.

(For full detail on DFW’s recommended public use regulation changes for lands owned or managed by DFW, please see agenda item 24 of the February 15, 2024 Commission meeting above)

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 6 regarding Department Lands, including greater detail on DFW’s recommendations, click [FGC Staff Summary – Department Lands](#)

Agenda Item 7 – Exotic Game Mammals and Wild Pig Validation

This item served as the second or “discussion” hearing on DFW’s proposed regulations for exotic game mammals and wild pig validations.

This item opened with a brief introductory statement by Commission staff Wildlife Advisor Ari Cornman. Commission President Eric Sklar then asked for public comment and there was none. Because this was the “discussion” hearing, and there was no formal presentation by DFW nor any action by the Commission required, the item was brought to a close.

(For greater detail on DFW’s proposed regulations for exotic game mammals and wild pig validations, please see agenda item 17 of the February 15, 2024 Commission meeting above)

This item will be discussed further with possible adoption taking place at the Commission’s February 2024 meeting.

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 7 regarding Exotic Game Mammals and Wild Pig Validation, including the DFW presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – Wild Pigs](#)

Agenda Item 8 – Permits and Draws for Special Hunts

This item was to allow for the Commission to consider approving sufficiently-related changes to the regulations adopted at their August 2023 meeting regarding special hunt permit issuance and drawings in the DFW Automated License Data System (ALDS).

Because this item was not ready for Commission consideration it was continued to the February 2024 meeting.

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 8 regarding permits and draws for special hunts, click [FGC Staff Summary – Special Hunts Permits and Draws](#)

***Agenda Item 12 – Committee and Department Reports
(B) Wildlife Resources Committee***

Because the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) serves as a subcommittee of the Commission, its topic areas, meeting agendas and Work Plan are subject to Commission approval. Under this item the Commission was to discuss referred topics, consider revisions to topics and timing, and consider approving draft agenda topics for the next WRC meeting.

Commission staff Wildlife Advisor Ari Cornman opened this item by stating that the next WRC meeting was currently scheduled for January 18, 2024, in Ontario. He then noted that the date may change and, if it does, those on the Commission email list will receive an email, and the change will also be noted on the Commission website meeting page.

Mr. Cornman then stated that, in addition to standing agenda items, four topics are proposed for January 2024 WRC. Those topics are:

- *Potential Rulemakings (all of which were vetted at previous WRC meetings)*
 - *Inland sport fishing*
 - *Wildlife Rehabilitation*
 - *Long- term regulation for white sturgeon fishing*
- *Take of Nongame Mammals: Discuss concerns regarding indiscriminate take of nongame mammals;*
- *Shotgun Wads: Initial discussion of plastic pollution caused by shotgun debris from waterfowl hunting;*
- *Waterfowl Hunting in Southampton Bay: Initial discussion to explore potential regulation changes to address waterfowl hunting noise concerns specific to Southampton Bay, consistent with Commission direction at their October 2023 meeting.*

Following discussion on other items under agenda item 12, the Commission unanimously voted to approve the draft WRC agenda topics as proposed and the updated WRC Work Plan.

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 12(B) regarding the WRC, including full detail on the WRC Work Plan, click [FGC Staff Summary – WRC](#)

PLAN AHEAD!!!

BELOW ARE THE DATES/LOCATIONS OF UPCOMING COMMISSION MEETINGS!

***For more information on any of the below Commission related meetings, click
<https://fgc.ca.gov/Meetings>***

***CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – April 2024 Meeting
The April 2024 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission is scheduled for
April 17th and 18th in the San Jose area.
Exact location TBD***

CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – May 2024 Meeting

*The May 2024 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission is scheduled for
May 15th and will be held via teleconference originating from
Natural Resources Headquarters Building
Second Floor
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814*

*WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE – May 2024 Meeting
The May 2024 meeting of the WRC is scheduled for May 16th and will be held in the
Yreka area
Exact location TBD*

*CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – June 2024 Meeting
The June 2024 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission is scheduled for
June 19th and 20th in the Mammoth Lakes area.
Exact location TBD*