



# **GAINES & ASSOCIATES**

## **“GAINES REPORT”**

### **CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION UPDATE**

**APRIL 15, 2025**

This *Gaines & Associates* “*California Fish and Game Commission Update*” is intended to provide our clients with the status of items of concern currently in front of the California Fish and Game Commission – including what to expect at this week’s meeting of the Commission in Sacramento, and a recap of what took place during the Commission’s February 2024 meeting.

This “*Gaines Report*” is client privileged and provided as a service to clients of *Gaines & Associates*.

For more information on any of the issues below, or more detail on the efforts of *Gaines & Associates*, please contact us at [info@gainesandassociates.net](mailto:info@gainesandassociates.net)

#### **CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – April 2025 Meeting**

The April 2025 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission is a two-day meeting scheduled for April 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. The public can attend this meeting in person at the following location:

***Capitol Event Center  
1020 11th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814***

The public may also participate in the meeting via webinar or phone. Visit [www.fgc.ca.gov](http://www.fgc.ca.gov) the day of the meeting to watch or listen. You may join the webinar directly at [April 2025 FGC Mtg - Webinar](#) For complete instructions on how to join via zoom or telephone, [click here](#).

To view the full agenda, click [FGC – April 2025 Mtg Agenda](#)

During this two-day meeting, all wildlife and inland fisheries related topics will be considered on the first day, while all marine related items will be considered on the second day. As a result, this *Gaines Report* will focus on the first day – Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>.

All agenda items of interest and concern to clients of *Gaines & Associates* are highlighted below:

**Wednesday, April 16, 2025 – 8:30 AM**

***Agenda Item 8 – Falconry***

This item will serve to provide the Commission with the opportunity to consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend sections 670 and 703 related to falconry. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is proposing to revise falconry regulations in three ways:

- *Conform regulations and the initial and renewal falconry license applications with the recent opinion issued by the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeal concerning the “certification” by applicants for falconry permits;*
- *Require falconers to take only California-administered falconry examinations (i.e., not falconry examinations administered by other states); and*
- *Delete restrictions on commercial exhibiting of falconry raptors (e.g., films, education) to conform with a district court’s November 10, 2022 stipulated judgment and order.*

The Commission has regulations authorizing falconry, pursuant to which DFW oversees the practice of falconry via issuance of licenses. Only licensed falconers are permitted to possess, house, trap, transport, and use raptors for the purpose of hunting or training.

In the current 2024/2025 license year there are approximately 600 California licensed falconers enjoying and showcasing the sport. The number of raptors in possession varies, but has sometimes exceeded 1,000 birds in recent license years.

DFW is recommending the above draft proposed amendments for the purpose of conforming certain provisions of the falconry regulations with recent court orders and to comply with federal falconry regulations.

This item will include a brief presentation by David Kiene from the Office of the General Counsel outlining the DFW proposal and their rationale for bringing these changes forward.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 8 regarding falconry regulations – including greater detail on each of the above recommendations and the DFW presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – Falconry](#)

***Agenda Item 9 – Waterfowl Hunting***

This item will serve as the adoption hearing on DFW’s proposed changes to waterfowl hunting regulations for the 2025/2026 waterfowl seasons.

At this meeting, DFW Waterfowl Program Lead Melanie Weaver will provide a detailed overview of DFW’s recommended seasons and bag limits for ducks and geese in all five of California’s waterfowl hunting zones for 2025/2026. Ms. Weaver’s presentation will open by providing the following summary of DFW recommendations for the 2025/2026 waterfowl season:

- *Increase duck and goose season length in most zones from 98 to 103 days;*
- *Increase the pintail daily bag limit from 1 to 3 birds per day in all zones;*
- *Brant season length decreased from 27 to 16 days;*
- *Swap the Veteran’s Hunt Weekend with the Youth Hunt Weekend in most zones;*
- *No Falconry-Only season in most zones due to increased length of general season.*

Ms. Weaver will then present DFW's specific recommended waterfowl regulations for 2025/2026, by zone, as follows:

**DFW Recommended Duck Bag Limit**

- 7-duck daily bag limit, including up to:
  - 7 Mallards (2 hens)
  - 3 Pintail
  - 2 Canvasback
  - 2 Redheads
  - 2 Scaup

**DFW Recommended Duck Seasons**

- *Northeastern Zone Season:*
  - *Regular Season: October 4 – January 14*
  - *Scaup: October 4 – November 30 and December 18 – January 14*
- *Balance of the State/Southern San Joaquin Valley/Southern California Zones:*
  - *Regular Season: October 18 – January 28 (103 days)*
  - *Scaup: November 4 – January 28*
- *Colorado River Zone:*
  - *Regular Season: October 23 – January 31*
  - *Scaup: November 7 – January 31*  
*(CA Must Match AZ Regulations)*

**DFW Recommended Goose Seasons & Bag Limits**

- *Northeastern Zone Goose Seasons:*
  - *Regular Season:*
    - *Canada Geese: October 4 – January 11*
    - *White Geese and Whitefront Geese: October 4 – November 30 and January 2 – January 14*
  - *Late Season: White Geese & Whitefronts: February 5 – March 10*
- *Northeastern Zone Goose Bag Limits:*
  - *30 Birds Total/Day:*
    - *20 White Geese*
    - *10 Dark Geese*
    - *No More Than 2 Large Canada Geese*
- *Balance of the State Zone Goose Seasons:*
  - *Early Canada Goose Season: September 27 – September 29*
  - *Regular Season: October 18 – January 25 (100 days)*
  - *Late Season: Canada Geese February 14 – 15*  
*White Geese & Whitefronts: February 14 – 18*

- *Balance of the State Zone Goose Bag Limits:*
  - *30 Birds Total/Day:*
    - *20 White Geese*
    - *10 Dark Geese*
- *Southern San Joaquin and Southern California Zone Goose Season:*
  - *Regular Season: October 18 – January 28 (103 days)*
- *Southern San Joaquin and Southern California Zone Goose Bag Limits:*
  - *30 Birds Total/Day:*
    - *20 White Geese*
    - *10 Dark Geese (Southern San Joaquin Zone)*
    - *3 Dark Geese (Southern California Zone)*
- *Colorado River Zone Goose Season:*
  - *Regular Season: October 23 – January 31*  
*(CA Must Match AZ Regulations)*
- *Colorado River Zone Goose Bag Limits:*
  - *25 Birds Total/Day:*
    - *Up to 20 White Geese*
    - *5 Dark Geese*  
*(CA Must Match AZ Regulations)*
- *Black Brant*
  - *Northern Zone: November 29 – December 14 (16 days)*
  - *Balance of the State Zone: November 30 – December 15 (16 days)*
- *Black Brant Bag Limits*
  - *2 Birds/Day*

*Special Management Areas*

- *North Coast*
  - *Regular Season: October 4 – December 20*
  - *Late Season: February 12 – March 10*
- *Klamath Basin*
  - *White Geese & Whitefronts: October 4 – January 16*
  - *Canada Geese: October 4 – January 11*
- *Sacramento Valley*
  - *Regular Season: October 18 – December 21*
- *Imperial Valley*
  - *Regular Season: November 1 – January 28*
  - *Late Season: January 31 – February 6 and*  
*February 12 – February 20*

**Youth Hunt Weekend**

- *Northeastern Zone: September 20 and 21*
- *Other Zones: February 7 and 8*

### **Veterans and Active Military Personnel (VAMP) Hunt Weekend**

- *Northeastern Zone: January 17 and 18*
- *All Other Zones: January 31 – February 1*

### **Falconry-Only**

- *Northeastern Zone: None*
- *Balance of State Zone, Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone, and Southern California Zone: None*
- *Colorado River Zone: February 1 – February 4*

Following the February 2025 meeting, the Commission published a notice of changes to the proposed regulatory language on March 18, 2025. That edit was made in subsection 502(d) Geese Late Season. The originally proposed language read “Season will be no longer than 5 days and closing no later than March 10.” The “5 days” was an error. The proposed language now reads, “Season will be no longer than 34 days and closing no later than March 10”.

*Gaines & Associates* will be pleased to again provide testimony at this meeting to ensure that the maximum scientifically justifiable waterfowl hunting opportunity is made available for all waterfowlers – including youth and veterans – during the 2025/2026 season in all five California waterfowl hunting zones.

Since the topic of 2025/2026 waterfowl regulations was first “noticed” at the Commission’s December 2024 meeting, *Gaines & Associates* has worked closely with DFW and *California Waterfowl Association* in an effort to secure maximum hunting opportunity by approving a 103-day general season, and ensuring the young hunters had the maximum number of days of “lay off” between the end of the general season and their Youth Weekend. To achieve this, *Gaines & Associates* and *California Waterfowl Association* recommended that the VAMP Weekend be held the weekend prior to the Youth Weekend in all but the Northeastern zone for the upcoming season. We are pleased that DFW is supporting all our recommendations in the final recommendations for the 2025/2026 waterfowl season that they are bringing forward to the Commission at this meeting

Following DFW’s presentation, questions from the dais, and public testimony, the Commission will consider final adoption of waterfowl hunting regulations for the 2025/2026 season.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 9 regarding 2025/2026 waterfowl regulations, including DFW’s brief presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2025/2026 Waterfowl](#)

### **Agenda Item 10 – Big Game Hunting and Chronic Wasting Disease Testing**

This agenda item will serve as the adoption hearing on DFW’s recommended changes to bighorn sheep, pronghorn, elk, deer hunting, and chronic wasting disease (CWD) regulations for the 2025 seasons.

This item will include a detailed presentation by DFW on their recommended 2025 hunting regulations and tag allocations for bighorn sheep, pronghorn, elk, and deer.

DFW’s notable recommended changes to 2025 mammal hunting regulations include the following:

### Deer and CWD

- *New G40 Late Season Hunt: November 22 through 30; Quota: 25 tags; Hunt Zone: That portion of Madera County that lies within D7.*
- *Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD):*
  - *Defines CWD Management Zone to be adaptive:*
    - *Any deer hunt zone where CWD-positive animal has been detected or is within 5 miles of a detection, excluding Zone A;*
    - *Within Zone A, any county where a CWD-positive animal has been detected or is within 5 miles of a detection.*
  - *Testing and Handling requirements:*
    - *Criteria for designating testing and handling requirements;*
    - *Director designation each year by July 1;*
    - *Permissible sampling methods and minimum data needs;*
    - *Handling requirements and exceptions, if implemented.*
  - *DFW to maintain a website with current CMZs (CWD Management Zone) and designations to notify hunters of requirements:*  
[www.Wildlife.ca.gov/CWD](http://www.Wildlife.ca.gov/CWD)

### Bighorn Sheep

- *Open Zone (OZ) Tag:*
  - *Clarify that the OZ tag can only hunt in zones that are issued a general tag;*
  - *Add Zone 10.*
- *Marble/Clipper/S. Bristol and Cady Fundraising Tags:*
  - *Change to “Single Zone Tag” and adjust wording to allow DFW to choose the zone each year, if needed;*
  - *Recommendations:*
    - *Single Zone Tag 1: Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, and Ord Mts*
    - *Single Zone Tag 2: Zone 2 – Old Dad and Kelso Peak*
- *Sheep Hole (Zone 6): Boundary Adjustment:*
  - *Adjust the boundary to better reflect habitat use of rams in this area;*
  - *Adjustment based on GPS data and home range analyses;*
  - *Zone adjustment will likely increase hunter opportunity.*
- *White Mountains (Zone 7):*
  - *Maintain summer season and pilot a winter season:*
    - *Period 1: August 16 – September 28, 2025*
    - *Period 2: January 3 – February 1, 2026*
  - *Increase tag allocation between both periods:*
    - *2024/2025 Season: 4 tags, range 0-6*
    - *Period 1: recommending 3 tags*
    - *Period 2: recommending 2 tags*
- *Newberry/Rodman/Ord (Zone 10):*
  - *Split the winter season into two periods:*
    - *Period 1: December 6, 2025 – January 3, 2026*
    - *Period 2: January 4, 2026 – February 1, 2026*

- *Increase the tag allocation*
  - *2024/2025 Season: 6 tags, range 0-6*
  - *Period 1: recommending 4 tags*
  - *Period 2: recommending 4 tags*

Proposed Bighorn sheep general tag quota adjustments for 2025 are as follows:

<u>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</u>	<u>2024/25 Tag Allocation</u>	<u>2025/2026 Recommendation</u>
<i>Zone 1 – Marble/Clipper Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Zone 2 – Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Zone 3 – Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Zone 4 – Orocopia Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Zone 5 – San Geronio Wilderness</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Zone 6 – Sheep Hole Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Zone 7 – White Mountains Period 1</i>	<i>4 total</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Zone 7 – White Mountains Period 2</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Zone 8 – South Bristol Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Zone 9 – Cady Mountains</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains Period 1</i>	<i>6 total</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains Period 2</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Total proposed tag allocation:</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>27</i>

<u>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</u>	<u>2024/25 Tag Allocation</u>	<u>2025/2026 Recommendation</u>
<i>Open Zone Fund-Raising Tag</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Marble/Clipper/S. Bristol Fundraising Tag</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Cady Mountains Fund-Raising Tag</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Total proposed fundraising tag allocation:</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>

*Pronghorn Antelope*

- *68 Tag reduction for the 24-25 hunt season;*
- *Administrative procedures require initiation of regulations prior to timing of winter helicopter surveys;*
- *Helicopter surveys (Feb. 2025) indicated a continued decline;*
- *Habitat management is critical to sustaining and recovering pronghorn herds therefore:*
  - *PLM tags not considered for reduction due to the critical habitat improvements they provide;*
  - *Currently, 1 PLM tag in both Likely Tables and Clear Lake.*

- DFW recommends reducing tags in Clear Lake and Likely Tables Hunt Zones by 21 tags

Recommended pronghorn antelope tag quotas are as follows:

<i>Hunt Code</i>	<i>Hunt Zone Description</i>	<i>2024 Approved</i>	<i>2025 Recommended</i>
710	Zone 1 - Mount Dome General - Buck	2	2
720	Zone 2 - Clear Lake General - Buck	12	6
728	Zone 2 - Clear Lake Archery - Buck	1	1
730	Zone 3 - Likely Tables General - Buck - Period 1	5	5
732	Zone 3 - Likely Tables General - Buck - Period 2	5	0
738	Zone 3 - Likely Tables Archery - Buck	5	0
734	Zone 3 - Likely Tables Apprentice - Either-sex	5	0
740	Zone 4 - Lassen General - Buck - Period 1	35	35
742	Zone 4 - Lassen General - Buck - Period 2	35	35
745	Zone 4 - Lassen Archery - Buck	5	5
790	Zone 4 - Lassen Apprentice - Either-sex	5	5
750	Zone 5 - Big Valley General - Buck	5	5
755	Zone 5 - Big Valley Archery - Buck	1	1
780	Zone 5 - Big Valley Apprentice - Either-sex	1	1
760	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley General - Buck	10	10
765	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley Archery - Buck	1	1
766	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley Apprentice - Either-sex	4	4
<i>Total</i>		<i>137</i>	<i>116</i>

### Elk and SHARE Elk

Highlights of DFW's recommended regulation changes for the 2025 elk hunting season are as follows:

<i>General Methods Elk Hunt Zone</i>	<i>2024 Approved</i>		<i>2025 Recommended</i>	
	<i>Bull</i>	<i>Antlerless</i>	<i>Bull</i>	<i>Antlerless</i>
<i>Tehachapi</i>	5	10	10	10
<i>Gabilan</i>	4	6	10	6
<i>Lake Pillsbury (Period 1)</i>	0	4	0	4
<i>Lake Pillsbury (Period 2)</i>	2	0	0	4
<i>Lake Pillsbury (Period 3) NEW</i>	-	-	0	2
<i>Lake Pillsbury (Period 4) NEW</i>	-	-	2	0
<i>Lake Pillsbury (Period 5) NEW</i>	-	-	2	0

*Net Change: 17 General tags added (13 bull, 4 antlerless)*

### *ALL NEW "Archery Only"*

<i>Elk Hunt Zone</i>	<i>2025 Recommended</i>	
	<i>Bull</i>	<i>Antlerless</i>
<i>Central Coast</i>	5	5
<i>La Panza</i>	5	5
<i>Siskiyou</i>	10	0



*Net Change: 30 General “Archery Only” tags added (20 bull, 10 antlerless)*

In addition to other things, the DFW presentation will also note that in the Northwestern and Mendocino “Conflict Zones” DFW is proposing a “collective hunting approach” which uses all the tools available – general, SHARE, and landowner tags – to manage elk populations. In those two zones alone, DFW is recommending a total of up to 321 tags, which break down as follows:

<i>General</i>			<i>SHARE</i>		<i>Landowner</i>		<i>Total</i>			
<i>Recommended</i>			<i>Recommended</i>		<i>Recommended</i>		<i>Recommended</i>			
<u>Bull</u>	<u>Antlerless</u>	<u>Either Sex</u>	<u>Bull</u>	<u>Antlerless</u>	<u>Bull</u>	<u>Antlerless</u>	=	<u>Bull</u>	<u>Antlerless</u>	<u>Either Sex</u>
27	15	3	60	90	21	105	=	108	210	3

DFW will conclude their lengthy presentation by noting that, for the Northwestern and Mendocino “Conflict Zones”, they are recommending a year-round hunt season for SHARE tags. Currently, the SHARE season runs from August 15 – January 31. For 2025, DFW is recommending the season run from July 1 – June 30 to allow for private landowner damage to be addressed year-round through public hunting opportunities.

Following DFW’s presentation, questions from the dais, and public testimony, the Commission will consider final adoption of all mammal hunting regulations for 2025.

For the past year, *Gaines & Associates* has work closely with the *California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association (CBHSAA)* and *Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF)* to secure maximum elk hunting opportunity – including a notable increase in “Archery Only” elk tags.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 10 regarding 2025 mammal hunting regulations – including the DFW staff presentation – click [FGC Staff Summary – 2025 Mammal](#)

#### ***Agenda Item 11 – White Sturgeon Sport Fishing 2084 Regular Rulemaking***

This item will serve as the second or “discussion” hearing on proposed amendments to regulations for the recreational take of, tagging of, and reporting requirements for, white sturgeon in inland and ocean waters.

The proposed regulation changes DFW is bringing forward are fundamentally the same as the emergency regulations, with the same minor modifications – including amending the current “calendar year” report card with a fee of \$11.06, to a “season” report card fee of \$7.50.

This item will include a presentation by Dr. John Kelly of the DFW Fisheries Branch which will open with some background on the current emergency regulation. Dr. Kelly will then provide more detail on their proposed changes to the sturgeon report card, including: changing the current “calendar year” report card to a “season” report card; the overlap of the report cards in year one; and the transition between the cards.

Because this is the “discussion” hearing on this topic, the Commission will not take any action.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda Item 11 regarding White Sturgeon Sport Fishing Rulemaking, including Dr. Kelly’s presentation, click [White Sturgeon Sport Fishing Rulemaking](#)

## ***Agenda Item 12 – Inland Sport Fishing***

### ***A) Central Valley Sport Fishing (Annual)***

This item will serve as the second or “discussion” hearing on proposed amendments to Central Valley sport fishing regulations.

### ***B) Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing (Annual)***

This item will serve as the second or “discussion” hearing on proposed amendments to Klamath River sport fishing regulations related to Chinook salmon.

The Commission adopts Central Valley sport fishing regulations and Klamath River Basin sport fishing regulations on an annual basis to align state regulations with federal fishery management recommendations made by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). PFMC will adopt its final regulatory recommendations this month for the upcoming season based on salmon abundance estimates and recommended ocean harvest.

Having completed its Stock Abundance Analysis and Environmental Assessment for 2025 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations in March 2025, the PFMC is scheduled to recommend its final management measures for the upcoming ocean salmon season at its April 9 – 15, 2025 meeting. At this Commission meeting, DFW will provide an update on the PFMC process and is anticipated to provide to the Commission preliminary recommendations for specific bag, possession, and size limits based on the recommended PFMC management measures for ocean salmon.

### ***A) Central Valley Sport Fishing***

DFW has also requested specific regulation changes dealing with flexible season start and end dates which are intended to only apply to Chinook salmon. Fishing seasons have historically been static and applied to all species managed by regulations. DFW is recommending changes to the proposed regulatory language to clarify that the static fishing season still applies to hatchery trout and hatchery steelhead and the flexible fishing season applies to Chinook salmon. DFW is also recommending to split the boundary for the Feather River into two subsections to allow for angling opportunities for Sacramento Fall-run Chinook Salmon (SRFC) in the lower Feather River when feasible, while still maintaining protective measures for salmon migrating in the Sacramento River during closures.

At this meeting, the Commission will consider approving the changes to the proposed regulatory amendments related to boundaries on the Feather River and separate seasons for Chinook salmon and hatchery trout and steelhead, as recommended by DFW by authorizing publication of a 15-day notice of sufficiently related changes to the proposed regulations.

The proposed regulatory amendments and any approved changes are scheduled to be adopted by the Commission at their May 14, 2025 teleconference meeting.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda Item 12A regarding 2025 Central Valley Sport Fishing, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2025 Central Valley Sport Fishing](#)

### ***A) Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing***

As noted above, the PFMC is scheduled to recommend its final management measures for the upcoming ocean salmon season at its April 9 –15, 2025 meeting. At this meeting, DFW will recommend specific bag, possession, and size limits for Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon (KRFC) based on the recommended PFMC management measures for ocean salmon.

This meeting is an opportunity for public discussion of the proposed regulation changes. No action will be taken by the Commission.

The Commission is scheduled to make its decision on the specific options within the noticed ranges at its May 14, 2025 meeting.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda Item 12B regarding 2025 Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2025 Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing](#)

***Agenda Item 16 – Regulation Change Petitions (Wildlife and Inland Fisheries)***

***(A) Receive New Petitions for Regulation Change***

***(B) Act on Previously Received Regulation Change Petitions***

***(C) Comments Received on Referred Petitions not yet Scheduled for Action***

***(A) Receive New Petitions for Regulation Change***

Under Item (A) the Commission will receive new petitions for regulatory change. Regulation change petition forms submitted by the public are “received” at this Commission meeting if they are delivered by the public comment or supplemental comment deadlines, or delivered in person to the Commission meeting. Consideration of whether to grant, deny, or refer for additional review any petition received at this meeting will be scheduled for the June 2025 Commission meeting.

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

***(B) Act on Previously Received Regulation Change Petitions***

Under Item (B) the Commission will consider whether to grant, deny, or refer for additional review, petitions for regulation change received at previous meetings. Petitions granted at this meeting will be added to the Commission’s rulemaking calendar for development and future consideration.

At this meeting, the Commission will act on one petition of interest:

***I. Petition 2020-016 AM1: Authorize use of a crossbow with a scope for those with visual disabilities.***

Petition 2020-016 AM1 proposes a regulation change which would authorize those with a visual disability to acquire a permit which would allow them to use a crossbow with a scope. The permit could be issued to any person with a physical disability that prevents him/her from being able to focus on the target utilizing archery bow sights.

DFW and Commission staff are recommending that Petition 2020-016 AM1 be denied because the regulation requested is already allowable. Currently, there is no regulation precluding a hunter from using a scope on a crossbow during general deer seasons. Additionally, there is no regulation precluding a mobility impaired hunter with a Disabled Archer Permit from using a scope on a crossbow during archery deer seasons.

***(C) Referred Petitions***

This agenda sub-item is for receiving public comments for any petition previously referred for review and recommendation but is not yet ready for Commission action. Action on any referred petition will be scheduled once the Commission receives a recommendation.

At this meeting, there are no comments on previously referred petitions.

To view the Commission staff summary on agenda item 16, click [FGC Staff Summary – Petitions for Regulatory Change](#)

### ***Agenda Item 18 – 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 noting that topics that have been referred by the Commission to WRC are displayed within a Work Plan for scheduling and tracking. Mr. Cornman should state that the updated Work Plan is in the Commission meeting binder and includes proposed topics for the May 2025 WRC meeting.

Mr. Cornman should then comment that, at their February 2025 meeting, the Commission requested WRC revisit the topic of “coyotes” associated with the take of nongame mammals topic and to keep the topic narrowly focused on coyotes. He should then comment that staff proposes renaming the topic from “Take of Nongame Mammals” to “Take of Coyotes” to more properly reflect the narrowed scope of the re-referred topic.

Mr. Cornman will also note that staff recommends referring “Black bear hunting” to WRC as a new topic, to initiate discussion on an upcoming DFW-recommended rulemaking following the release of their April 2025 “Black Bear Conservation and Management Plan for California” on April 14, 2025.

To view the Plan, click [Black Bear Conservation and Management Plan for California](#)

Mr. Cornman will then state that the next WRC meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2025 in Sacramento, with webinar and phone options. In addition to standing agenda items (DFW updates and future agenda items), six topics are proposed for discussion at the May meeting:

- *Periodic and Annual Rulemakings: Initial vetting for:*
  - *Upland (resident) game birds;*
  - *Mammal hunting;*
  - *Waterfowl hunting;*
  - *Central Valley sport fishing;*
  - *Klamath River Basin sport fishing.*
  - *Department Lands*
- *Take of Coyotes: Discussion and potential recommendation for concerns regarding the indiscriminate take of coyotes.*
- *Bear Hunting: Initial vetting for amendments to bear hunting zones, tags, and other aspects.*

Following Mr. Cornman’s comments, questions from the dais, and public testimony, the Commission is expected to approve the draft agenda topics for the May 15 WRC meeting, and approve the Work Plan as proposed, including any changes identified during today’s meeting.

Note that *Gaines & Associates* will be present at the May 15, 2025 meeting of the WRC and will be prepared to provide detailed comments on many of the above topic areas – including substantial commentary in opposition to WRC moving forward with a recommendation to place seasons and bag limits on coyotes by removing coyotes from 14 C.C.R. §472.

To view our letter in opposition to removal of coyotes from 14 C.C.R. §472, click the link below [Wildlife Coalition Ltr – Removal of Coyotes from §472 - OPPOSE](#)

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 18(B) regarding the WRC, including full detail on the WRC Work Plan, click [FGC Staff Summary – WRC](#)

### **CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – February 2025 Meeting Recap**

The February 2025 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission was a two-day meeting held on February 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> in Sacramento. All wildlife and sport fish related topics were considered on the first day, with all marine related topics considered on the second day. As a result, this *Gaines Report* will focus on the first day – Wednesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>.

To view the full agenda, click [FGC – February 2025 Mtg Agenda](#)

All agenda items of interest and concern to clients of *Gaines & Associates* are highlighted below:

#### **Wednesday, February 12, 2025 – 8:00 AM**

The Wednesday, February 12, 2025 meeting of the Commission was opened by Commission Vice-President Erika Zavaleta with Commissioners Anderson and Sklar present. Commission President Samantha Murray soon joined the meeting and Commissioner Hostler-Carmesin was absent.

All agenda items of interest and concern to clients of *Gaines & Associates* are highlighted below:

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

*(This agenda item was moved to the second day and heard on Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>)*

Under this agenda item the Commissioners elected their President and Vice-President for 2025. In 2024, Commissioner Samantha Murray served as President and Commissioner Erika Zavaleta served as Vice-President.

Following some brief discussion on the dais and public comment, Commissioner Zavaleta was elected President for 2025, and Commissioner Murray was elected to serve 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***

*(Note that this agenda item was also heard on Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>)*

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.

Following some discussion on the dais and public comment, the Commission unanimously agreed that committee assignments for 2025 would remain the same as they were in 2024. Those assignments are as follows:

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

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

### ***Agenda Item 8 – Inland Sport Fishing***

#### ***A) Central Valley Sport Fishing (Annual)***

This item served as an opportunity for the Commission to consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend 2025 Central Valley salmon sport fishing regulations.

#### ***B) Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing (Annual)***

This item served as an opportunity for the Commission to consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend 2025 Klamath River Basin salmon sport fishing regulations related to Chinook salmon.

The Commission adopts Central Valley sport fishing regulations and Klamath River Basin sport fishing regulations on an annual basis to align state regulations with federal fishery management recommendations made by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). PFMC will adopt its final regulatory recommendations in April 2025 for the upcoming season based on salmon abundance estimates and recommended ocean harvest.

A broad scope of initial options are intentionally provided for both Central Valley and Klamath River Basin sport fishing regulations in order to allow for flexibility in developing the final

regulations for each respective package. This flexibility is necessary to allow the Commission to quickly adopt regulations given the timing of the PFMC process. DFW will recommend specific regulation changes to the Commission at their April 2025 meeting for potential adoption at the Commission's May 2025 teleconference meeting.

#### ***A) Central Valley Sport Fishing***

After some brief opening comments, Commission staff Wildlife Advisor Ari Cornman introduced Colby Hause, Senior Environmental Scientist with the DFW Fisheries Branch, who gave a presentation on Central Valley sport fishing regulations. Ms. Hause's presentation opened with her noting that the Central Valley is currently closed to the take and possession of Sacramento Fall-run Chinook Salmon (SRFC). She then covered DFW's proposed SRFC regulatory options for 2025; justification for proposed regulatory changes; and the timeline for adopting 2025 regulations and when they would go into effect.

Ms. Hause stated that the range of regulatory options DFW is considering for Central Valley salmon in 2025 included:

- *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.*

Ms. Hause then commented that current season dates do not allow any flexibility for evaluation of season timing/length on an annual basis. To address this concern, for 2025, DFW is proposing to build flexibility into the regulations for all sections in the Central Valley to adjust season start and end dates for all sections ranges. This flexibility would allow DFW to end seasons early, start seasons later, or a combination of the two. Season length would remain in the form of 'consecutive fishing days'. Ms. Hause explained that having this flexibility will allow DFW to minimize fishery impacts during stressful environmental conditions and low adult returns. Further, it will allow DFW to maximize fishing opportunity while establishing protective measures to reduce potential incidental catch of non-target Chinook salmon in stretches of the Sacramento River that are known to hold Central Valley Spring-run Chinook Salmon, especially in low precipitation years when they do not have access to their natal streams.

#### ***A) Klamath River Basin Sport Fishing***

Immediately following her presentation on Central Valley sport fishing regulations, Ms. Hause gave a presentation on Klamath River Basin sport fishing regulations. In this presentation, Ms. Hause covered management of Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon (KRFC) and Klamath River Basin sub-quota areas; noted that the Klamath River Basin is currently closed to the take and possession of KRFC; provided DFW's regulatory proposals for 2025 – including KRFC regulatory options for existing and newly expanded river sections; and covered a proposal to move Klamath River Chinook salmon (KRSC) fishery management under an annual regulation cycle.

Ms. Hause then stated that the range of regulatory options DFW is considering for KRFC Salmon downstream of Iron Gate in 2025 include:



- *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;*
- *Grilse/Adult Size Cutoff Range: 20-24 inches*
- *Seasons:*
  - *August 15 – December 31 (Klamath River);*
  - *September 1 – December 31 (Trinity River);*
- *Closed to the take and possession of KRFC.*

Ms. Hause then covered regulations for KRFC in anadromous waters above Iron Gate.

Shifting her attention to KRSC, Ms. Hause provided background on the need for regulatory changes – noting that KRSC are temporally and spatially separated from KRFC and the in-river sport fishery is managed by general basin seasons, daily bag limit, and possession limits. Ms. Hause stated that the current regulatory rolls the season, possession limit, and bag limit over year to year with no annual evaluation, and any regulatory changes requiring amendments in a separate rulemaking. To address this concern, DFW is proposing to move KRSC regulations under the Klamath River Sportfish Package to allow for them to be evaluated on an annual basis.

Ms. Hause then provided justification for the proposed changes to KRSC, commenting that salmon stocks across California are depressed and in need of adaptive management. Ms. Hause noted that KRSC overlaps in ocean distribution with KRFC and experiences similar environmental challenges. However, current regulations lack flexibility in managing KRSC fishery based on environmental and fishery conditions. She pointed out that, for the past two years, DFW has proposed emergency regulations to close the KRSC fishery in response to low forecasted returns of KRFC. Moving to an annual package would allow DFW to close or adjust harvest of KRSC without going through the emergency regulation process.

Ms. Hause then dove into the regulatory options DFW is considering for KRSC in 2025, including:

- *Geographic area:*
  - *Klamath River: downstream of highway 96 Bridge at Weitchpec*
  - *Trinity River: downstream of Old Lewiston Bridge to the confluence of the South Fork Trinity River*
- *Seasons:*
  - *Klamath River: July 1 - August 14*
  - *Trinity River: July 1 - August 31*
- *Bag and Possession Limits:*
  - *Option 1:*
    - *Bag Limit:*
      - *Current: 1 Chinook salmon*
      - *Proposed: 0-1 Chinook Salmon*
    - *Possession Limit:*
      - *Current: 2 Chinook Salmon*
      - *Proposed: 0-2 Chinook Salmon*
  - *Option 2:*
    - *Closed to the take and possession of KRSC salmon*



Following Ms. Hause's presentation, some comments from the dais, and very brief public testimony, the Commission voted unanimously to authorize publication of a notice of its intent to amend Klamath River Basin sport fishing regulations and Central Valley sport fishing regulations, as recommended by DFW.

The 2025 inland sportfishing regulations will be discussed further at the Commission's April 2025 meeting, with the adoption hearing for held via teleconference on May 14, 2025.

New regulations for SRFC will go into effect July 16, 2025.

New KRSC regulations will go into effect on July 1, 2025.

New KRFC regulations will go into effect on August 15, 2025.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda Item 8 regarding 2025 Inland Sport Fishing, including much greater detail on the topic and both of Mr. Hause's presentations, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2025 Inland Sport Fishing](#)

### ***Agenda Item 9 – White Sturgeon Sport Fishing 2084 Regular Rulemaking***

Under this item the Commission considered authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend regulations for the recreational take of, tagging of, and reporting requirements for, white sturgeon. The intent of this item is to replace the emergency regulation currently in place for white sturgeon with a permanent regulation which would stay in place until the Commission takes further action, should they choose to do so.

To provide some background, the Commission originally adopted catch-and-release (no harvest) regulations for white sturgeon sport fishing in August 2024. Prior to this meeting, DFW provided the Commission with draft documents to enable the Commission to consider continuing the emergency regulations through regular rulemaking.

This item opened with a presentation by Jonathan Nelson of the DFW Fisheries Branch. Mr. Nelson kicked off his presentation with some background on the current emergency regulation. Mr. Nelson then touched upon the regulations DFW is recommending for rulemaking, which included:

- *Report Card Required*
- *Catch and Release Only (No harvest)*
- *Fishing Season and Area Closures:*
  - *Downstream of the confluence of the Feather/Sacramento Rivers & San Joaquin River I-5 Bridge - Open October 1 – June 30*
  - *Upstream of the confluence of the Feather/Sacramento rivers & San Joaquin River I-5 Bridge - Open October 1 – December 31*
  - *Tributaries of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers – Closed*
- *Handling restrictions:*
  - *White Sturgeon >60 in. FL may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.*
  - *Sturgeon of any size shall not be held out of water suspended by the gills, gill plates, mouth, or solely by the tail, and shall not be dragged across the ground, boat decks, or piers.*

Mr. Nelson then dove into the emergency regulation timeline, noting that the Emergency Catch-and-Release sportfishing regulation was renewed by the Commission in December 2024 for 90

days, from March through May 2025. Mr. Nelson commented that DFW will propose an additional 90-day renewal to extend the emergency regulation from June through September 2025 – noting that, should the Commission not take action on that extension, the emergency regulation will expire on September 5, 2025, and the catch and-release fishery will close for the remainder of the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) candidacy period.

Mr. Nelson then commented that DFW is also proposing to change the report card season to October 1 – June 30 to match the fishing season, rather than the calendar year. The reason being that such a change would improve data management and allow non-compliance assessment. Mr. Nelson noted that DFW is exploring how to address the overlap period between calendar year and season cards. Mr. Nelson then closed his presentation by stating that DFW is recommended that the report card fee be reset between \$5 – \$11.

Following Mr. Nelson’s presentation, questions from the dais, and a call for public testimony (there was none), the Commission voted unanimously to authorize publication of a notice of its intent to amend/repeal sections related to white sturgeon sport fishing, as discussed.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda Item 9 regarding White Sturgeon Sport Fishing 2084 Regular Rulemaking, including full detail on the topic and Mr. Nelson presentation, click [White Sturgeon Sport Fishing 2084 Rulemaking](#)

### ***Agenda Item 10 – Waterfowl Hunting***

This item served as the “discussion” hearing on DFW’s proposed changes to waterfowl hunting regulations for the 2025/2026 waterfowl seasons.

At the December 2024 Commission hearing, DFW Waterfowl Coordinator Melanie Weaver provided the Commission with a detailed presentation noting that the proposed federal frameworks for the 2025/2026 waterfowl season included a liberal package for ducks of 107-day seasons, a seven-bird daily bag for most species, and a daily bag of three pintail (based on new USFWS Pintail Harvest Strategy). Ms. Weaver also stated that the federal framework also included 107-day seasons for geese, with black brant to be determined after the fall survey has been analyzed.

In her brief presentation at this meeting, Ms. Weaver simply stated that the below options are on the table for the regular 2025 waterfowl season:

- 99-days: 4th Saturday in October through Friday, January 31
- 100-days: 3rd Saturday in October through Sunday, January 25
- 102-days: 3rd Saturday in October through Tuesday, January 27
- 103-days: 3rd Saturday in October through Wednesday, January 28

Ms. Weaver noted that there are pros and cons to each of the above options – including the loss of falconry-only hunt days the longer the general season goes. Further, she stated that the 102- and 103-day season options would have the season close on a weekday and would have some impact on the Youth Weekend, should it remain as the weekend immediately following the close of the general season. Ms. Weaver also mentioned that, should we opt for the 102- or 103-day season, the general goose season would have to close earlier than duck season to allow for the 5-day late goose season.

Following Ms. Weaver’s presentation, the Commission called for public testimony. *Gaines & Associates* first thanked DFW staff for working with us for the past several months in an effort to

reach agreement on the final recommendations that they will bring forth at the April adoption hearing. We then provided the Commission with an overview of our recommendations for the 2025/2026 waterfowl season, which included: a) a 103-day season in the Balance of State, Southern San Joaquin, and Southern California Zones with ducks and geese opening on October 18, and geese closing on January 25 and ducks on January 28; b) swapping the Youth Weekend with the VAMP Weekend to allow for the maximum amount of rest for the birds to ensure the highest possible quality shoot for the youth shooters (VAMP Weekend being January 31 and February 1, and the Youth Weekend being February 7 and 8); and scheduling the Late Goose Season for February 14 – 18. We closed by confirming our strong support for California taking advantage of the option to offer a 3-bird pintail bag in 2025/2026.

Because this was the “discussion” hearing, the Commission did not take any action. Further discussion and final adoption of DFW’s proposed 2025/2026 waterfowl package will take place at the Commission’s April 2025 meeting.

*Gaines & Associates* will continue to work closely with *California Waterfowl Association* and DFW leading up to the April 2025 adoption hearing to ensure that the maximum scientifically justifiable waterfowl hunting opportunity is made available for the 2025/2026 season in all five California waterfowl hunting zones.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 10 regarding 2025/2026 waterfowl regulations, including DFW’s brief presentation, click [FGC Staff Summary – 2025/2026 Waterfowl](#)

### ***Agenda Item 11 – Big Game Hunting and Chronic Wasting Disease Testing***

This agenda item served as the “discussion” hearing on DFW’s recommended changes to bighorn sheep, pronghorn, elk, and deer hunting regulations for the 2025 seasons and chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing.

At their December 2024 meeting, the Commission authorized publication of a notice of its intent to amend regulations related to big game hunting and CWD testing.

Since then, at the January 2025 meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC), DFW discussed how to restrict cervid movement within and out of CWD Management Zones (CMZs). WRC supported incorporating regulatory changes related to cervid carcass movement into the current big game hunting and CWD testing rulemaking. These draft changes can be summarized as follows:

- *Authority for the DFW director to designate “testing and handling CMZs” in which the movement of certain carcass parts is restricted and submitting samples for CWD testing is mandatory. Specifies the criteria by which the decision to designate these zones must be made.*
- *Adding regulations for a “testing and handling CMZ,” specifying what parts of the carcass can be transported and/or kept after harvest, valid sampling methods and proper disposal of remains, and information that must be provided when submitting a sample.*

This item included a presentation by Dr. Brandon Munk, DFW Senior Wildlife Veterinarian, on DFW’s amended recommendations for deer testing requirements. Dr. Munk noted that DFW was defining CWD Management Zones (CMZs) as:

- *Excluding Zone A, any deer hunt zone where a CWD-positive deer was taken, or within 5 miles of where a CWD-positive deer was taken;*
- *Within Zone A, any county where a CWD positive animal has been taken, or within 5 miles of where a CWD-positive animal was taken.*

Continuing, Dr. Munk stated that DFW was recommending that deer harvest requirements be designated by the Director prior to July 1 of same year:

- *Testing CMZs – mandatory CWD sampling, permissible sampling methods and data;*
- *Testing and handling CMZs – mandatory sampling and restrict high-risk materials to harvest site with a few exceptions.*

As a reminder, at the December 2024 Commission meeting, DFW staff also gave a detailed presentation noting that the preliminary changes to hunting regulations they are bringing forward for 2025 were as follows:

#### *Deer and CWD*

- *Establish a late season buck hunt in deer hunt zone D-7 (Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, and Tulare counties)*
  - *Proposed G40 Hunt: November 22nd through 30th; Quota: 0-50 tags; Hunt Zone: That portion of Madera County that lies within D7*
- *Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) – transition emergency regulation into “standard” regulation to maintain reporting*
- *Define chronic wasting disease management zones (CMZs)*
  - *Establish mandatory sampling requirements to enhance CWD surveillance within CMZs and establish what information hunters must provide with their harvested samples*
- *Indicate how and where the DFW provides current information on CWD detections in the state*

#### *Bighorn Sheep*

- *Modify hunt tag quotas to maintain viable bighorn sheep populations and provide sustainable public sport hunting opportunities*
- *Clarify valid zones for the Open Zone Fundraising Tag, including Zone 10*
- *Modify two named fundraising tags to select zones*
- *Modify a zone boundary in the Sheep Hole Mountains Hunt Zone*
- *Divide the hunt season into two periods for the Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains Hunt Zone, and add winter season to the White Mountains Hunt Zone*

Proposed Bighorn sheep general tag quota adjustments for 2025 are as follows:

	2024/25 Tag Allocation	2025/2026 Proposed Tag Range
<i>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</i>		
<i>Zone 1 – Marble/Clipper Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0-5</i>
<i>Zone 2 – Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0-2</i>

<i>Zone 3 – Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0-4</i>
<i>Zone 4 – Orocopia Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0-2</i>
<i>Zone 5 – San Gorgonio Wilderness</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0-3</i>
<i>Zone 6 – Sheep Hole Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0-2</i>
<i>Zone 7 – White Mountains</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0-6</i>
<i>Zone 7 – White Mountains Period 1</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0-4</i>
<i>Zone 7 – White Mountains Period 2</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0-4</i>
<i>Zone 8 – South Bristol Mountains</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0-3</i>
<i>Zone 9 – Cady Mountains</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0-4</i>
<i>Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0-6</i>
<i>Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains Period 1</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0-7</i>
<i>Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains Period 2</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0-7</i>
<i>Total proposed tag allocation:</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>0-49</i>

	<i>2024/25 Tag Allocation</i>	<i>2025/2026 Proposed Tag Range</i>
<i>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</i>		
<i>Open Zone Fund-Raising Tag</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Marble/Clipper/S. Bristol Fundraising Tag</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0-1</i>
<i>Cady Mountains Fund-Raising Tag</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0-1</i>
<i>Total proposed fundraising tag allocation:</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0-3</i>

#### *Pronghorn*

- *Modify hunt tag quotas. Prioritize annual population surveys in northeastern California due to population declines in northeastern California.*
  - *Scheduled for January – February 2025*
  - *Decreasing population estimate may require reduction of tags*

#### *Elk and SHARE Elk*

- *Modify general and hunt tag quotas and SHARE tag allocations*
  - *Lake Pillsbury EMU*
  - *Bear Valley EMU*
  - *Gabilan EMU*
  - *Tehachapi EMU*
- *Add archery-only hunt opportunities*
  - *Siskiyou EMU*
  - *Central Coast EMU*
  - *La Panza EMU*
- *Expand SHARE hunt season for coastal conflict zones*

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 current proposals brought forward at this meeting only contained ranges for tag amounts that will be refined as the rulemaking process progresses. Final tag quota recommendations for each species will be brought forward at the Commission's April 2025 "adoption" hearing on 2025 mammal hunting regulations.

Following Dr. Munk's presentation and some comments from the dais, the Commission called for public testimony. Testifying on behalf of our big game clients, *Gaines & Associates* thanked DFW staff for meeting several times throughout the past several months to discuss our concerns and work with us on trying to reach consensus on the final recommendations they will bring forward to the Commission at the April adoption hearing. *Gaines & Associates* also thanked DFW staff for coordinating with wildlife conservation NGOs on a "free raffle" successful deer hunters who submitted a CWD sample may enter for free.

Following public testimony, the Commission unanimously authorized publication of a 15-day notice of related changes to proposed big game and CWD testing regulations with changes to the regulatory language as discussed at this meeting.

As this was the discussion hearing, no other action was taken by the Commission at the time.

Final adoption of all mammal hunting regulations for 2025 will take place at the Commission's April 2025 meeting.

*Gaines & Associates* also has worked closely with the *California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association (CBHSAA)* and *Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF)* to secure additional elk hunting opportunity – including a notable increase in archery only elk tags. *Gaines & Associates*, *CBHSAA*, and *RMEF* will continue to work with DFW staff to secure additional elk hunting opportunities and archery only tags in the weeks leading up to final adoption of the 2025 mammal regulations in April 2025.

To review the Commission staff summary on agenda item 11 regarding 2025 mammal hunting regulations – including the DFW staff presentation – click [FGC Staff Summary – 2025 Mammal](#)

### ***Agenda Item 15 – Regulation Change Petitions (Wildlife)***

#### ***(A) Petitions for Action Today***

Under Item (A) the Commission considered whether to grant, deny, or refer for additional review, petitions for regulation change received at previous meetings. Petitions granted at this meeting were to be added to the Commission's rulemaking calendar for development and future consideration.

At this meeting, the Commission acted on one petition of interest:

#### ***I. Petition 2020-016 AM1: Authorize use of a crossbow with a scope for those with visual disabilities.***

Petition 2020-016 AM1 proposes a regulation change which would authorize those with a visual disability to acquire a permit which would allow them to use a crossbow with a scope. The permit could be issued to any person with a physical disability that prevents him/her from being able to focus on the target utilizing archery bow sights.

At this meeting Commission staff recommended that Petition 2020-016 AM1 be referred to DFW for evaluation and recommendation.

### ***(B) New Petitions***

Under Item (B) the Commission was to receive new petitions for regulatory change. Regulation change petition forms submitted by the public would be “received” at this Commission meeting if they were delivered by the public comment or supplemental comment deadlines, or delivered in person to the Commission meeting. Consideration of whether to grant, deny, or refer for additional review any petition received at this meeting would be scheduled for the next Commission meeting.

At this meeting, the Commission did not receive any new petitions for regulation change.

### ***(C) Referred Petitions***

This agenda sub-item was for receiving public comments for any petition previously referred for review and recommendation but that was not yet ready for Commission action. Action on any referred petition would be scheduled once the Commission receives a recommendation.

At this meeting, there were no comments on previously referred petitions.

To view the Commission staff summary on agenda item 15, including full detail on all petitions subject to action at this meeting, click [FGC Staff Summary – Petitions for Regulatory Change](#)

## ***Agenda Item 16 – 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 opened this item by noting that the WRC met on January 15<sup>th</sup> and covered the following topics:

- *Inland Sport Fishing:*
  - *Striped bass slot limit – DFW proposed change of an 18-30 inch slot limit*
  - *Inland sport fishing – DFW’s proposed changes*
- *Big game hunting:*
  - *Preference points – possible point returns due to wildlife*
  - *Chronic wasting disease – potential regulations to limit the movement of deer carcasses within CWD management zones*
- *Falconry: DFW’s proposed changes to falconry regulations:*
  - *Delete certification agreeing to unannounced inspections*
  - *Delete restrictions on exhibiting birds*
  - *Disallow out-of-state falconry examinations*
  - *Require that birds be housed outside of residences (with limited exceptions)*
- *Take of Nongame Mammals: Detailed discussion on a proposal to remove coyotes from the broad non-game take provisions of 14 C.C.R. § 472, while maintaining coyote sport hunting opportunities.*

Note that *Gaines & Associates* was present at the January 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the WRC and provided detailed comments on most of the above topic areas. Under the topic of “Take of Nongame Mammals” *Gaines & Associates* provided substantial commentary in opposition to WRC moving



forward with a recommendation to remove coyotes from 14 C.C.R. § 472. For full detail on the arguments presented in opposition to that possible recommendation, please see our wildlife conservation coalition letter that was submitted to the Commission last week.

[Wildlife Coalition Ltr – Removal of Coyotes from § 472 - OPPOSE](#)

Mr. Cornman then commented that the following recommendations for possible future rulemaking were brought forward from WRC for Commission consideration at this meeting:

- 1) *Striped Bass Slot Limit: Support a future rulemaking to set a striped bass slot limit of 18-30 inches, as recommended by DFW, and request that DFW continue monitoring striped bass populations and their impact on salmonids.*
- 2) *Inland Sport Fishing: Support a future rulemaking regarding inland sport fishing, as recommended by the DFW, with timing to be discussed.*
- 3) *Big Game Hunting – Preference Points: Direct Commission staff to collaborate with DFW to construct and propose regulations for return of big game preference points due to wildfire, to increase efficiency and reduce DFW workload, through a future rulemaking.*
- 4) *Big Game Hunting – CWD: Direct Commission staff to collaborate with DFW to recommend an appropriate spatial scale for a movement restriction for deer, and support adding regulatory language regarding the movement of deer carcasses in CMZs to the current big game rulemaking.*
- 5) *Falconry: Approve scheduling an additional WRC meeting via teleconference sometime between the February and April Commission meetings, with the sole topic of falconry regulations.*
- 6) *Take of Nongame Mammals: Support a future rulemaking focused on coyotes, to remove coyotes from the broad take provisions of Section 472 while maintaining coyote sport hunting opportunities.*

Mr. Cornman then stated that topics referred from the Commission to WRC are displayed in a Work Plan for scheduling and tracking, which was included in the Commission's binder.

Mr. Cornman then closed by stating that no new draft topics were brought forward by WRC for Commission consideration at this time.

Following Mr. Cornman's comments, the Commission voted to approve the WRC recommendations from the January 15, 2025 meeting, and approved the updated Work Plan as discussed at this meeting – except for coyotes, which was re-referred to the WRC; and falconry for which the Commission supports scheduling a rulemaking regarding falconry without any changes regarding outside bird housing, to be scheduled for notice at the April 2025 meeting. The Commission also supported combining recommended inland sport fishing regulatory changes with a future inland sport fishing rulemaking.

To view Commission staff summary for agenda item 16(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>*

*Due to budget related travel restrictions, all Commission related meetings will be held in Sacramento until further notice.*

### ***WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE – May 2025 Meeting***

*The May 2025 meeting of the WRC is scheduled for May 15<sup>th</sup> in the  
Natural Resources Headquarters Building  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814*

### ***CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – June 2025 Meeting***

*The June 2025 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission is scheduled for  
June 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> and will be held in Sacramento.  
Exace Location TBD*

### ***CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION – August 2025 Meeting***

*The August 2025 meeting of the California Fish and Game Commission is scheduled for  
August 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> and will be held in Sacramento.  
Exace Location TBD*

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