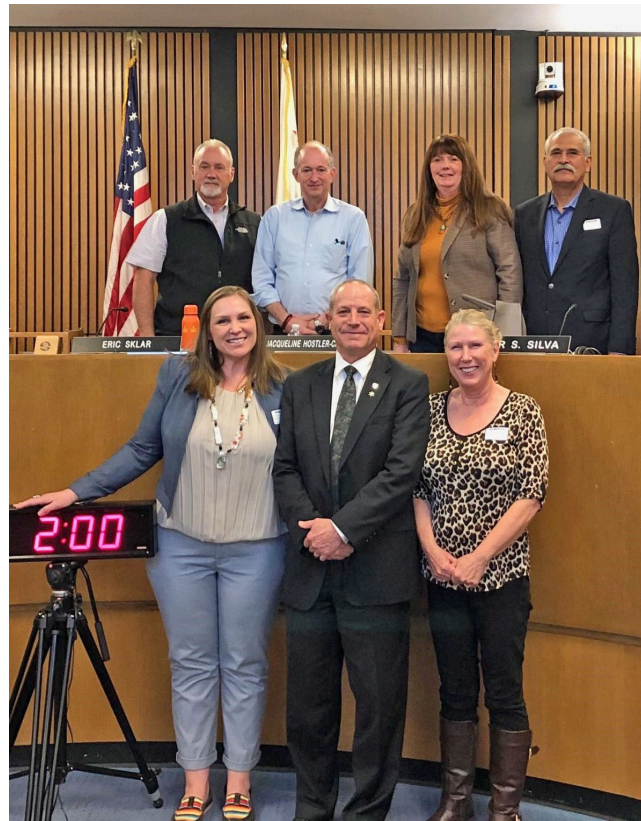


Fish and Game Commission, tribes pave path toward cooperative management of natural resources

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The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation and the Fish and Game Commission recently agreed upon a definition of the collaborative management of natural resources. The Tolowa Dee-ni' released the following press statement:

The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation applauds the California Fish and Game Commission for voting unanimously to adopt a definition of collaborative management, opening the door for the state and Tribal governments to form partnerships focused on the strategic stewardship of the natural environment.

"We sincerely thank the forward-looking Commission for approving the co-management definition," said Denise Richards-Padgette, the chairperson of the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. "This decision paves a path for tribes and the state to cooperatively govern natural resources within tribal ancestral territories. It is a win for the 109 federally recognized tribes in California and for tribal sovereignty."

“To get this language where it’s at today, it’s an incredible thing,” said Eric Sklar, Fish and Game Commission President at the Feb. 20 meeting. “I don’t know if anything like this exists anywhere else in the world and I’m super proud that we are leaders in this effort. It’s really a very important moment.”

Two-years in the making, the definition of co-management, as it relates to fish and wildlife, was established with guidance from the Commission’s Tribal Committee and Tribes throughout California, including the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation. On behalf of the Nation, Briannon Fraley, Tolowa Office of Self-Governance director, participated in every stage of the development of the co-management resolution.

The following is the agreed upon definition:

“A collaborative effort established through an agreement in which two or more sovereigns mutually negotiate, define and allocate amongst themselves the sharing of management functions and responsibilities for a given territory, area or set of natural resources.”

The definition enables tribes and the state to form agreements facilitating the cooperative management of natural resources across their respective jurisdictions. Co-management agreements have the potential to positively influence fish and wildlife populations in a number of ways. For example, tribes and the state may elect to partner on projects to restore large mammals’ migratory routes, which commonly traverse bureaucratic boundaries.

“Tribes have much to offer the state, especially when it comes to stewardship of natural resources,” said Fraley, who contributed to the co-management language and is a tribal citizen. “In our region, we maintained the temperate coastal redwood ecosystem to produce all that we needed to thrive for uncountable generations, until genocide was inflicted upon our people. Today, the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation uses tribal science which is a dynamic blend of traditional ecological knowledge and Western science to restore fish and wildlife populations for the future.”