

California Fish and Game Commission denies petition to end waterfowl hunting on the Lake Earl Wildlife Area

December 20, 2022



At its December meeting, the California Fish and Game Commission acted on several issues affecting California's natural resources. The following are just a few items of interest from this month's meeting held in San Diego with an option for the public to join via Zoom.

Among action on a number of petitions, the Commission denied a petition to end waterfowl hunting on the Lake Earl Wildlife Area in Del Norte County. The petition was filed over concerns shooting was occurring too close to a nearby business and residence bordering the wildlife area, along with claims that poaching, wasting of game and hunter misconduct were occurring.

Waterfowl hunting has taken place for many generations on the Lake Earl Wildlife Area and Commission staff noted that the California Fish and Game Code already addresses the illegal conduct described in the petition. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Law Enforcement Division is also aware of the claims raised in the petition. The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors and Del Norte Waterfowlers group both opposed the petition.

Also relating to waterfowl, the Commission recognized five new inductees into the California Waterfowlers Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame was established in 1999 to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to enhancing waterfowl and their habitats in California.

The new inductees are philanthropist William F. Berry; Glenn Olson of the National Audubon Society; retired University of Nevada, Reno Professor Jim Sedinger; Bob Shaffer, formerly with the Central Valley Joint Venture; and former Humboldt County Supervisor Jimmy Smith (posthumous).

The Commission adopted a second, 90-day extension of emergency regulations allowing the conditional take of southern California steelhead under certain circumstances. The southern California steelhead is a candidate species for listing under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) by the Commission. The extension of emergency regulations will allow work to continue on projects relating to flood control, highway maintenance and improvement, and water supply for domestic and commercial uses.

With the Commission's approval of a second, 90-day extension of conditional take, CDFW issued a reminder that the emergency regulations will expire on approximately May 15, 2023, after which no new CESA take authorization for southern California steelhead can be issued under the emergency regulations and all existing take authorizations issued under Section 749.13 of the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, will expire.

The Commission authorized a notice of intent to amend regulations pertaining to commercial and recreational take of spiny lobster; recreational hoop net requirements for the take of crustaceans; and hunting waterfowl, elk and bighorn sheep.

Four Commissioners were present or participating online during the meeting. They were President Samantha Murray, Vice President Erika Zavaleta, and Commissioners Jacque Hostler-Carmesin and Anthony Williams. Commissioner Eric Sklar was absent.

The agenda for this meeting, along with supporting information, is available on the Commission website. An archived audio file will be available in the coming days. The next meeting of the full Commission is scheduled for February 8-9, 2023, at the California Natural Resources Headquarters Building in downtown Sacramento.

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The California Fish and Game Commission was one of the first wildlife conservation agencies in the United States, predating even the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries. There is often confusion about the distinction between the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Commission. In the most basic terms, CDFW implements and enforces the regulations set by the Commission, as well as provides biological data and expertise to inform the Commission's decision-making process.