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Fish and Game Commission



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WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE PREDATOR POLICY WORKGROUP

Meeting Summary
July 12, 2016

Department of Parks and Recreation
Redwood Conference Room (14th Floor)
1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Following is a summary of the meeting prepared by staff.

Call to order; roll call of workgroup members

Meeting was called to order by Wildlife Advisor Erin Chappell, who introduced Fish and Game Commission (FGC) staff and Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) staff. Self-introductions were made by the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC)'s Predator Policy Workgroup (Workgroup) members.

Commission Staff

Valerie Termini	Executive Director
Erin Chappell	Wildlife Advisor
Caren Woodson	Analyst

DFW Staff

Garry Kelley	Acting Chief, Wildlife Branch
Patrick Foy	Captain, Law Enforcement Division
Scott Gardner	Senior Environmental Scientist
Chris Stermer	Senior Environmental Scientist

Workgroup Members

Noelle Cremer	Mark Hennelly
Rebecca Dmytryk	Dr. Rick Hopkins
Jennifer Fearing	Erica Sanko
Bill Gaines	Jean Su

Erin Chappell outlined the meeting procedures and let participants know that the meeting was being audio-recorded for posting to the website with a staff summary.

1. Public forum for items not on the agenda

No public comments were received.

Erin Chappell reminded the Workgroup that any written comments received for their consideration will be included in the binder under this agenda item. The Workgroup can schedule any comments they decide to address at a future meeting.

2. Predator policies and regulations

Erin Chappell reminded the Workgroup that their draft work plan was approved by FGC at the June 2016 meeting in Bakersfield. Caren Woodson provided a quick review of the difference between policy, law, and regulation to help frame the group discussion.

(A) Review existing predator policies and regulations

Erin Chappell provided an overview of the existing, relevant policies compiled for Objective 1, tasks 1 and 2 of the Workgroup work plan (see meeting materials, Exhibit 2.2). She reviewed California's wildlife management policy (Fish and Game Code Section 1801), three FGC policies, and examples from other states.

- FGC Policies
 - Depredation control (adopted pre-1982)
 - Raptors (amended 1993)
 - Wild pigs (amended 1993)
- Other state policies
 - Idaho – Avian and Mammalian Predation
 - Colorado -- Mammalian Predator Management (1999)
 - Utah – Predator Management Plans as of 2012 (coyote, red fox, cougar)
 - Arizona – Predator Management (2000)
 - Washington – Objective in Game Management Plan (2003)
 - Oregon - Legislation-required study and report and also established a Workgroup (2015)

(B) Identify and discuss predator management issue(s) not adequately addressed under existing policies and regulations

Erin Chappell initiated a discussion on the predator management issues

not being adequately addressed under existing policies.

- (Rebecca Dymytrk) - Appreciates Fish and Game Code Section 1801 and suggested including or restating the provisions of the law as an officially adopted FGC policy. Suggested duplicating some of the raptor policy language for the predator policy. Suggested a policy similar to the policy on non-native frogs and turtles for feral cats. Economic loss should be the burden of the producers not the public.
- (Mark Hennelly) – Liked the effort to maintain balance between native predators and prey found in some of the policies. Noted that using hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities as a management tool are important because they provide revenue to DFW plus enjoyment opportunity for all. Noted that humans have the opportunity to create balance through proper management activity and must be involved in managing ecosystems to create and maintain balance; conservation activities such as modifying habitat and hunting can contribute to that balance.
- (Bill Gaines) – Liked the examples of action being necessary when predators start to have an impact on managed species. Also liked the idea of linking back to management plans in that it provides a place for baseline evaluation and framework.
- (Noelle Cremer) – Noted that as a state we prioritize agricultural production as valuable and the system of law respects that resource and aims to protect against the loss. Management of wildlife to protect private property has a historical basis and should be protected moving forward.
- (Jennifer Fearing) – Suggested DFW Strategic Vision effort could provide some direction and ideas. For example, using ecosystem management informed by science was among the key objectives adopted. Ought to try to align our Predator Policy with the previous work done on vision effort. Don't think there are separate world views; there is consensus about management, but we need to be clear about intentions, goals, and purposes.
- (Rebecca Dymytrk) – Suggested expanding on the human role on impact of animals, for example the harassing and feeding of wildlife. Noted human behavior is at the core of many wildlife conflicts and this policy should mitigate those behaviors.
 - (Noelle) - Does feeding of wildlife include having fruit trees in your yard?
 - (Rebecca) – I think policy needs to acknowledge that planting of fruit trees, free range sheep and cattle, can inadvertently create problems and encourage wildlife conflicts.
 - (Noelle) - We have property rights in this country, I would have a problem supporting efforts that restrict rights to use property.
 - (Rebecca) – It's not about prohibiting the problematic use, but

- rather establishing a policy that acknowledges human behavior impact on wildlife conflicts and related nuisances.
- (Erica Sanko) - Agricultural producers already have methods in place to reduce wildlife conflicts. Not sure that everyone is clear about the types of management currently undertaken by farmers and producers. Also noted that sound science is a problem moving forward since DFW is not producing the science necessary to help inform decision or policy. Management should include direct and indirect consequences of a policy or regulation.
 - Chris Stermer (DFW) – Noted that the statewide population data is inadequate and that we may never have accurate statewide population estimates. It's important to identify what research is needed and how we might obtain it. Moving forward we are seeking to get better data statewide so we can estimate with confidence where populations may be abundant and/or rare.
 - (Rick Hopkins) – Noted that DFW/FGC can't influence livestock and farming practices. They are limited to wildlife matters. The FGC oversees wildlife, not livestock or agriculture. Sound science is a bit of a misnomer; all population estimates are regional occupancy estimates. Interest in changes in populations usually based on regional efforts. Thinks DFW has great information and is generating useful information and doesn't advocate spending money on statewide population estimates.
 - (Bill) - Management plans should be used as the barometer of predator impacts.
 - (Mark) – Policy should be about providing wildlife managers with as many tools and as much flexibility as possible.
 - (Jean Su) – Very cognizant of private property but would like to echo a perspective of human-predator conflict. Hope to get to a place where we encourage exhausting all nonlethal options before entertaining lethal options.
 - Public Comments
 - Suggestion to keep focus on species that require management, in particular coyotes in Los Angeles area, rather than on the secondary species (i.e., mountain lions, wolves, and bears).
 - Comment that the term “management” has different meanings and it may be important to be clear about how the Workgroup is using it. Management for what? To what end? What is the intent? What is the goal?
 - Suggestion to consider using “human-predator conflict resolution” language rather than “predator control” to acknowledge the role of human behavior.

- Commenter was not sure that a statewide management plan for species requires population estimates and therefore would discourage a complete disregard for species specific plans.

Erin Chappell suggested focusing the discussion on identifying the goal or purpose of the predator policy

- (Rick Hopkins) – Noted that policy should set goal in a way that could be used regionally.
- (Jennifer Fearing) - Existing FGC policies provide for regional options, for example the raptors policy, but include the overarching principles and goals. Absent a policy, there is a tendency to not value predators as demonstrated by the existence of regulation and law that permit unfettered and unchecked hunting behavior. Insufficient tools available for managing conflicts.
- (Rebecca Dmytryk) – Suggested drafting a policy based on the existing raptor policy and provided some language for consideration.
- (Mark Hennelly) – Policy needs to underscore the impact to prey populations. Recommended looking at what other states have done and use those policies as a starting point rather than the raptor policy. Noted that he likes the Oregon and Washington principles.
- Scott Gardner (DFW) – Suggested using the state wildlife policy and existing policies from other states to see which elements fit with the state policy.
- (Noelle Cremer) – Suggested using the state wildlife policy as the template for the predator policy, specifically the inclusion of economic impacts of wildlife element.
- (Erica Sanko) – Asked about the success or failure of the policies from other states and expressed concerned about adopting ideas from other states without having an assessment of their effectiveness.

Erin Chappell led the group in a brainstorming exercise to identify which elements should be captured in a predator policy. The group identified the following elements:

- Role of predators in ecosystem – both positive and negative impacts to other wildlife, especially other managed prey/species.
- Value – intrinsic, ecological, recreational, aesthetic, educational, economic, fiscal, scientific, historical significance/heritage
- Public health and safety – both positive and negative impacts
- Economic losses/impacts
- Use and enjoyment
- Recognition of human-wildlife conflicts
- Discussion included consideration of definitions for predators and prey (domestic vs wild and native vs. non-native) and how they might be used in the policy.

- **SUMMARY:** There was general agreement to consider these elements in a draft policy. FGC staff will prepare draft language based on today's discussion for the Workgroup to consider and refine at the next meeting.

Erin Chappell suggested moving the discussion about existing regulations to the next meeting to allow Workgroup more time to evaluate which management issues may need to be addressed.

- **SUMMARY:** The Workgroup agreed with moving the discussion and have committed to reviewing the regulations on their own in preparation for the next meeting. A question about the availability of maps delineating boundaries found within some of the regulations was raised. Scott Gardner responded that DFW does have some maps and can make them available to the Workgroup.

3. Discuss coordination between Workgroup and reviewers

Erin Chappell provided an overview of the previous discussion at the April 2016 Workgroup meeting and the outcomes from the June 28, 2016 teleconference call with reviewers.

- **SUMMARY:** Twelve reviewers participated on the call. The reviewers expressed concern that seven to ten days was insufficient review time and requested at least full two weeks (14 days). The reviewers will self-organize into subgroups to help facilitate the review process. Erin Chappell suggested that the Workgroup should stagger pieces for review instead of waiting until everything is compiled in a single document. This would help to facilitate timeliness. There was general agreement by the Workgroup on that approach.

4. Review and provide input on draft outline of report

Erin Chappell provided an overview of the outline and solicited feedback from the group.

- **Summary:** There was a comment that Chapter 7 (Recommendations) seemed redundant and there was general agreement that it should be the basis of the content for the executive summary. There was discussion about the report including characterization of issues where consensus was not obtainable with some way to clarify or underscore the options of the minority and majority opinions. A question was raised regarding whether it was necessary to include the word management in the "Predator Management Policy" or could it just be referred to as the "Predator Policy". Based on the discussion the Workgroup decided to use "Predator Policy" with the acknowledgement that management would be addressed as a component of the policy.
- **DECISION:** The Workgroup reached consensus on a decision to use

the terminology “predator policy” in the report.

5. Next steps

(A) Review work plan tasks and timeline

Erin Chappell reviewed the work plan tasks and timeline, noting that the timeline is very ambitious and may need to shift to accommodate schedules and reviews. She suggested pushing presenting the draft policy to the WRC (Objective 2, task 3) in September 2016 to January 2017 to allow more time for the Workgroup to fully vet the language and provide time to consider input from the reviewers.

- **SUMMARY:** The Workgroup agreed with the suggestion to move the draft policy to January and the identified the following tasks for the next Workgroup meeting:
 - FGC staff will draft language for a predator policy based on the discussion heard today and provide it at the next meeting for discussion and revision.
 - FGC staff will provide previously-drafted spreadsheet on regulations.
 - Workgroup members will continue their review of existing policies in preparation for the policy discussion.
 - Workgroup members will review and prepare clean-up and/or suggested changes to regulations in preparation for the regulation discussion.

(B) Potential new agenda topics

The Workgroup identified the following topics for the next meeting:

- Draft policy discussion
- Review of existing regulations
- DFW presentation or discussion of DFW presentation, if a presentation is scheduled for the September WRC meeting. This presentation will focus on the eight priority species and related efforts.

Standing agenda items include public forum, update on report development, and next steps.

(C) Select date for next meeting

The Workgroup selected the following dates for the next two meetings. Both meetings will be held in the Sacramento area.

- **Wednesday, September 28, 2016 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, November 1, 2016 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Adjournment