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Fish and Game Commission



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WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE PREDATOR POLICY WORKGROUP

Members: Josh Brones, Noelle Cremers, Rebecca Dmytryk, Jennifer Fearing, Bill Gaines, Mark Hennelly, Rick Hopkins, Tony Linegar, Erica Sanko, and Jean Su

Meeting Summary November 1, 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

The meeting was called to order at 9:38 a.m. by Wildlife Advisor Erin Chappell, who introduced Fish and Game Commission (FGC) staff and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) staff. Self-introductions were made by the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC)'s Predator Policy Workgroup (Workgroup) members.

FGC Staff

Erin Chappell Wildlife Advisor
Caren Woodson Analyst

DFW Staff

Chris Stoots Lieutenant, Law Enforcement Division
Scott Gardner Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)

Workgroup Members

Josh Brones	Mark Hennelly
Noelle Cremers	Dr. Rick Hopkins
Rebecca Dmytryk	Tony Linegar
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.

2. Discuss and revise draft predator policy

Erin Chappell introduced the topic and provided an overview of the timeline for public comment on the draft policy, to be considered at the Jan 18, 2017 WRC meeting. A draft policy and the reviewer comments on the draft policy were provided to the Workgroup members prior to the meeting (see meeting materials exhibits 2.1 and 2.2 at www.fgc.ca.gov/meetings/2016/Nov/ppwg/exhibits/SS_1101_Item2_PredatorPolicy.pdf).

Erin initiated the discussion by providing an overview of the reviewer comments submitted on the draft policy and asked the Workgroup for their input on whether an introductory statement should be added to the draft policy. The Workgroup discussed the addition of an introductory statement but decided not to add one. Discussion of the draft policy then continued sequentially.

Section I (Values)

- Public Comment - a stakeholder noted that adverse impacts to local governments and communities were not explicitly covered in the policy and suggested including economic impacts along with public health and safety and private property impacts.
 - Jennifer – suggested keeping it more general to avoid running into difficulty once we start trying to elucidate every single issue.
 - Rick – noted the purpose of the policy is two-fold; that it's not intended to explain everything but to be more like a mission statement. Regulations are intended to be more specific.
 - Mark – suggested adding “and other economic impacts”.
 - Tony – noted that counties and other local agencies have to pay for predator control and that acknowledging that fiscal impact on local government is important.
 - Public Comment – one reviewer expressed support for including the economic and social impacts explicitly. Another reviewer commented that if going to spell out every negative impact then the same should be done on the positive side.
- Erin – noted FGC executive staff suggestion to modify the text related to ensuring the various values, as FGC cannot ensure values but rather ensure the consideration of values. The Workgroup members discussed various alternatives including “conserve”, “recognize”, “acknowledge”, “promote”, and “affirms”.
- Jennifer – requested clarification on what “educational” value means in this context.
- Public Comment – a reviewer suggested adding “biological” to list of values.

Section II (Conservation and Management)

- The Workgroup discussed the suggested organizational changes submitted by the Mountain Lion Foundation in regards to the separation of the recreational piece from the conservation piece.

Section II (Conservation and Management) Part A

- Noelle – expressed concerns about use of word “restore” in regards to predator communities because it may unwittingly provide a foothold for arguments to reintroduce grizzly bears. The Workgroup discussed adding “existing” or “currently extant” to address concern.
- Erin – noted some of the reviewer comments suggested providing more flexibility in text regarding the ‘monitoring, maintaining, restoring, *and* enhancing’. The Workgroup discussed modifying the text to “and/or” to provide more flexibility.
- Rebecca – suggested using language submitted by Dale Steele with regard to recreational take.
 - Bill – noted he was uncomfortable with some of the proposed language
 - Noelle – noted that she was more comfortable with the “conducted” rather than the proposed use of “regulated”.
 - Rebecca – noted her preference for use of “regulated”.
 - Jennifer – suggested simplifying the text to just “recreational take of”; also asked why a qualifier is necessary related to providing “optimal” recreational opportunities.
 - Erica – raised a question about the use of the word “sustainable”.
 - Scott Gardner – noted “sustainable” is a general term and that hunting has been in the context of maintaining sustainable populations.
 - Erin – noted that State agencies, including DFW and FGC, commonly use the term “sustainable” in this context.
- Erin – noted some reviewer comments to include “peer-reviewed” to “best available science”.
 - Bill – commented that “peer-reviewed” puts too much pressure on DFW where the science doesn’t exist.
 - Public comment - policy needs to acknowledge that it was developed absent scientific expertise and that it’s not just about best available science but also about the lack of science.
 - Rick – disagreed, noting the existing literature on predators and the participation by DFW scientists in this process.
 - Scott Gardner – noted that “best available science” is a robust and appropriate term to use.

Section II (Conservation and Management) Part B

- Rick – noted that the foundation of predator management is really a broader term than just reducing conflict.
 - Erin – posed a question to the Workgroup on whether to expand the paragraph to include all foundations or edit paragraph to be specific for conflict. The Workgroup discussed and opted to keep the paragraph specific to conflict.
- Noelle – suggested changing “crops and livestock” to “agriculture.
- Noelle - concerned about inclusion of “habituation” because it assumes that all conflict is related to habituation which is not always the case; suggested separating into two sentences using “efforts should be made to minimize habituation of predators where it leads to conflict” to address habitation piece.

- Jennifer – raised concerns about the use of the term “cost-effective” in regards to non-lethal options. The Workgroup discussed it and opted to change it to “feasible” which encapsulates cost-effective.
- Public Comment – suggestion to add local laws and regulations.

Section II (Conservation and Management) Part C

- Rebecca – suggested reviewing Dale Steele’s comments on this section.
- Jennifer – questioned the need for this section and suggested referencing Fish and Game Code instead. Also suggested including “in the context of ecosystem-based management” to the Section I (Values) as an option.
 - Erin - intent of paragraph is to get at DFW management and other management objectives.
- Erica – raised concerns about including “social constraints”.
- Public Comment – reviewer noted that ecosystem management is important piece of this document and would not want to see removal of predators in order to increase prey populations.
- Jennifer – raised concerns about the inclusion of specific management options, especially related to predator removal/take, noting this section doesn’t provide the same balance as other sections.
 - Tony - it’s relevant to include take because of the pressure upon private land owners to not take predators.
 - Jean – noted preference to remove them but if group decided to include a list it should be more balanced.
- The Workgroup discussed several ways to modify this section to address concerns and identified important concepts to include. Those concepts were: consistency with other conservation and management plans, consideration of the ecological relationships that may be affected by management actions, and having a broad range of management tools. The Workgroup revised the text to reflect these concepts.

Summary: The Workgroup reviewed the draft with all the revisions. Erin will add language to the beginning of the policy to clearly define which species are covered by the policy. Once that is completed, Erin will send the final draft policy to the Workgroup and the reviewers. Erin will present the final draft policy to WRC in Jan 2017 for review and discussion.

3. Identify existing predator regulations to propose for revision

Erin provided an overview from the Sep 2016 Workgroup meeting and led a brief discussion on how to approach the regulations.

- Rick – posed a question to the Workgroup about whether to go for the low hanging fruit (where there is some consensus) or to dive into the more pithy regulations first.
 - Jean – suggested starting with the low hanging fruit and see how it goes.
 - Erin – suggested addressing the priority species first, for example Sections 461, 462, and 464, noting that starting with furbearing mammals may be a way to ease into discussions about the use of

- traps; another option could be to flesh out the concerns and/or issues for each of the major discussion topics discussed at the last meeting.
- Rick – suggested that whatever approach we agree to FGC staff should create an annotated outline so that group may conduct some homework.
 - Jean – suggested picking one of the topics and try to understand what the concerns are and deal with regulations that fit within the topic area.

DECISION: The Workgroup decided to focus on the major discussion topics and selected depredation and recreational take as the first two topics to address. Erin will provide information on those topics and coordinate with DFW on possible presentations for the Feb 2017 Workgroup meeting.

4. Next steps

Erin reviewed the project tasks and timeline and provided possible dates for the next meeting. The Workgroup was unable to find meeting dates in Dec 2016 or Jan 2017 due to scheduling conflicts.

DECISION: The Workgroup selected **Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2017 from 10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m.** for the next meeting. The meeting will be held in the Sacramento area; exact location to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.