

Fish & Game COMMISSION

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August 3, 2004 04:003

Fish and Game Commission Wins “Commission of the Year” Award

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) selected the California Fish and Game Commission as Commission of the Year for 2004 at its July 24-29 meeting in Sun Valley, ID.

Upon hearing of the award, Commission President Jim Kellogg said, “For the California Fish and Game Commission to have been selected as Commission of the Year at the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies annual conference is an honor and privilege for each of the individual Commissioners. The Commissioners earned this recognition for their diligence and hard work confronting each and every issue with the most professional, heartfelt and thought-out decision process imaginable. It is a privilege for me to be President of this distinguished Commission while receiving this honor and we thank the Association for the recognition.”

The Commission was recognized for its ability to imaginatively, aggressively and consistently pursue an affirmative course of action relating to its many diverse challenges to perpetuate California’s rich and varied fish and wildlife and habitat resources, with balancing sound management principles and the needs and desires of its citizenry. Some examples include:

- In December 1998, the Commission adopted its first Strategic Plan which focuses on California’s diminishing fish and wildlife resources, their importance to California, their management and the role of the Commission to ensure their future sustainability through proactive and creative approaches and meeting constitutionally and statutorily mandated responsibilities.
- As stewards of California’s fish and wildlife resources, providing hunting and fishing opportunities and at the same time acting as trustee of these same resources, the Commission has shifted toward policies and regulations aimed at managing resources on an ecosystem basis rather than on a species by species basis.
- The Commission has adopted 58 policies to guide the conduct of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG). Some recently adopted policies include: Criteria for Considering Appeals of Permanent Revocations of a

Commercial License or Permit; Shellfish and Sea Otter Conflicts; Marine Ecological Reserves; Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries; Emerging Fisheries; and Heritage Trout. In addition, the Commission has adopted three Joint Policies with the Board of Forestry.

- The California Marine Life Management Act, which became effective Jan. 1, 1999, delegated to the Commission new authority to manage marine resources in cooperation with fishermen, scientists and interested citizens. The principal tool to be used was the Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which will draw heavily on incorporating the best scientific information available to manage California's marine resources. The Commission has adopted a Master Plan which provides the guidelines in adopting FMPs and has adopted a White Seabass FMP and Nearshore FMP. The Commission will be adopting a Squid FMP and Abalone Recovery and Management Plan later this year. With these continued successes, each year the Legislature provides additional authority to the Commission. In 2003, the Legislature gave the Commission the authority to manage the commercial rock crab fishery. This year, the Legislature is considering new authority to the Commission to manage the commercial Dungeness crab fishery and to regulate all trawl fisheries.
- In addition to these actions, the Commission adopted a suite of regulations affecting rockfish, lingcod, cabezon, greenling and California sheephead, some of which complement Federal fishery management regulations for some of these species. The Commission has also adopted restricted access regulations, in accordance with the above-mentioned Restricted Access Policy, for the pink shrimp trawl, spot prawn trap, and nearshore fisheries. These programs have reduced fishing effort and excess capitalization in each fishery, while providing for the orderly conduct of the fisheries.
- On Oct. 23, 2002, after many lengthy Commission hearings, and with a two-year constituent involvement process, the Commission adopted the largest network of underwater marine reserves off the entire West Coast. This process has received a wide review and evaluation by many states to be used as a possible model in other areas.
- On Aug. 30, 2002, the Commission made a finding that the populations of coho salmon from San Francisco to Punta Gorda in Humboldt County warranted listing as an endangered species and the populations of coho salmon from Punta Gorda to the Oregon border warranted listing as a threatened species. In a landmark decision, the Commission delayed the regulatory action to list coho salmon for one year and directed the DFG to prepare a recovery plan for the species. DFG requested a six-month extension and the Commission adopted the Recovery Strategy at its Feb. 4, 2004 meeting. This is the first time such an approach has been taken in dealing with a threatened or endangered species petition.

- The Commission has worked with DFG, the Mountain Lion Foundation, other members of the public and the Legislature to address the sensitive issue of mountain lion predation on endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. This process resulted in significant gains in authority for DFG to manage mountain lions that are threats to the survival of this endangered species.
- The Commission has initiated and provided continued staffing and scheduling for meetings of Commissioners from neighboring states and has continued a Bi-State Commission meeting with Nevada to discuss matters of mutual interest, with emphasis on trans-boundary migratory deer.
- In another innovative approach, the Commission established a permit/license appeal process which utilizes a hearing officer, similar to an Administrative Law Judge, who hears the appeal and makes a recommendation to the Commission. This procedure frees up valuable time on the Commission's agenda to discuss highly controversial resource items and has allowed for more consistent rulings. All those involved in this new appeal process has given it high marks and have deemed it a rousing success.

Additionally, WAFWA presented Robert Treanor, Executive Director of the Commission, with its 2004 Professional of the Year Award in recognition of his lifelong commitment to California's fish and wildlife resources. Treanor started with the DFG in 1969 as a seasonal aide. In 1985 he was promoted to Assistant Executive Secretary of the Commission. He served in this capacity until June 1990 when he became the Commission's Executive Director. Treanor has earned the respect and admiration of everyone he works with on behalf of the Commission. His memory and expertise of Commission authorities and regulatory process are legendary within and without the Commission and DFG. It has been through his high degree of credibility and integrity that the Legislature decided to provide the Commission with its vast new authority. The successes the Commission has achieved during the past 15 years are the direct result of Treanor's leadership.

WAFWA is an organization of the fish and wildlife agencies from 23 states and Canadian provinces, from Yukon south to Texas and west from Alaska to Hawaii. It advocates states' rights in fish and wildlife issues; promotes efficiencies in government by exchanging research and management information; and promotes multi-state, range-wide initiatives to keep species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act.

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