

Department of Fish and Game
Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision Proposed Actions
January 5, 2012

The following are a series of specific actions developed by the Department of Fish and Game ("Department") for consideration as part of the Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision process. Over the past six months, the Department has provided information upon request to the Strategic Vision Stakeholder Advisory Group, Blue Ribbon Citizen Commission and Executive Committee. Based on listening to and reviewing the work product of these groups, the Department's executive team has developed this set of actions after considering input from Department staff, managers, and other sources. They are organized according to the categories provided in AB 2376 (Huffman), but can also be considered within the context of the problem statements developed by the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) and approved by the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee (BRCC).

(1) Improving and enhancing capacity of the department and the commission to fulfill their public trust responsibilities to protect and manage the state's fish and wildlife for their ecological values and for the use and benefit of the people of the state.

- Request legislative relief from outdated, outmoded, unfunded, and conflicting mandates.
- Review remaining mandates and propose consolidation or modification where appropriate.

(2) Comprehensive biodiversity management, including conservation planning and monitoring.

- Develop and deliver conservation planning policies and programs that highlight the existing Natural Communities Conservation Planning programs while addressing the need for additional tools to better address the expanding complexity of natural resource conservation and planning.
- Develop and request authority for implementation of a fee-for-service to fully support the multi-state Conservation Banking program.
- Pursue continued support for federal conservation funding and more fully develop a process for delivering conservation funding on an annual priority basis.

(3) Sustainable ecosystem functions, including terrestrial, freshwater, and marine habitat.

- Identify and secure consistent funding for management of DFG lands.

- Develop and implement strategies for effective water conservation, water quality and drainage management on DFG lands.
- Identify adequate and consistent funding to more fully develop DFG's instream flow program.
- Develop a water acquisition policy to serve as the basis for DFG to coordinate internally and externally with other agencies and interest groups to acquire water rights for instream flow purposes.

(4) Opportunities for sustainable recreational and commercial harvest of fish and wildlife.

- Recommend changes to existing fee-for-use structures that provide consistent and adequate funding for the science and management supporting sustainable harvest programs.
- Request a thorough review and revision to the Fish and Game Code towards more readily understood and enforceable fishing and hunting regulations.

(5) Permitting, regulatory, and enforcement functions.

- Seek authority to sponsor or support legislation to establish egregious and illegal commercialization cases as felony statutes.
- Establish a team to prosecute wildlife cases either through the existing structure of circuit prosecutors, the AG's office or an enhanced system with identified judges specializing in environmental / wildlife crime.
- Create a dedicated joint department and FGC Commission Regulation and Policy Support unit that will provide a centralized, consistent and compliant operation that focuses on the regulatory process and improves the quality and effectiveness of regulatory and policy interactions between the Department and Commission.
- Seek authority to sponsor or support legislation for a statutory CEQA exemption for small scale restoration projects and for DFG / WCB actions to "pass through" bond or federal funding for such projects.
- Seek authority to sponsor legislation that would allow incidental take under certain circumstances of "fully protected" species related to management activities (e.g. fold into the California Endangered Species Act ("CESA") or mirror CESA take authority.)

(6) Science capacity and academic relationships, including strategies to protect and enhance the independence and integrity of the science that forms the basis for department and commission policies and decisions.

- Identify and secure consistent funding for, or agreements necessary to, provide Department science staff free or low-cost access to leading scientific journals and periodicals.
- Review existing monitoring and other scientific endeavors within DFG to affirm scientific rigor and applicability to decision recommendations.
- Develop and implement a mechanism to improve the Department's scientific capability, including developing practices that ensure a rigorous science program within the Department that informs management and policy.

(7) Education, communication, and relations with the public, landowners, nonprofit entities, and land management agencies.

- Place a communications person in each region. Not only will this person be responsible for generating media stories and answering media calls, but they will also be an "expert" of sorts in the region and know all about projects, programs, etc.
- As part of an overall communications plan, identify high-level branding and recognition strategies to enhance recognition of the Department by the general public.
- Increase DFG's social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
- Improve community relations with the help of the Natural Resource Volunteer Program to educate the public on issues such as Keep Me Wild, Conservation Education, Marine Protected Area boundaries, enforcement information, regulation clarification, etc.

(8) Reforms necessary to take on the challenges of the 21st century, including, but not necessarily limited to:

(A) Climate change and adaptation.

- Roll out the DFG Climate University Training Course within one year. The training course will cover the fundamentals of climate science and will provide the tools and resources necessary to empower staff to better incorporate climate change into their responsibilities.
- Continue involvement in leadership role on the Steering Committee for the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Plan.
- Continue involvement in a leadership role as the chair for the WAFWA Climate Change Committee.

(B) Meeting California's future renewable energy needs while protecting sensitive habitat.

- Provide permit issuance training for DFG headquarters and regional staff.

- Provide positions that focus only on compliance monitoring once permits are issued.
- Identify and secure consistent funding for staff participation in long-term conservation planning and policy development for renewable energy projects.

(C) The restoration of the state's native fish species.

(D) Implementing and updating the state's Wildlife Action Plan.

- Within 1 year, complete a revision of the existing Wildlife Action Plan that captures the most current science, planning, and climate change adaptation approaches.

(9) The development and deployment of technology to meet the department's mission, including data modeling, collection, and online reporting.

- Explore the strategic role of Information Technology within the Department.
- Acquire the necessary software / hardware to allow these tasks to be automated, which would free staff to work on other Department priorities.
- Identify and secure consistent funding to conduct modeling, data collection, etc to participate in FERC and Water Board proceedings.

(10) Budget and fiscal development, accounting, and management.

- Complete the budget component overhaul currently underway to simplify budget and activity tracking.
- Prepare for action by control agencies to deliver improved technology and budget management systems.

(11) Coordination among state agencies.

- Develop a more robust and interactive web presence that describes the extensive partnerships already underway and identifies areas where more effective partnership opportunities may exist.
- Continue the conservation assessment partnership between Caltrans and the Department.

(12) Recommendations for institutional or governance changes, including clarification of the roles of the commission and the department.

- Evaluate a structural realignment to emphasize marine policy and management activities at the division level.

- More fully integrate marine regulatory programs in common with terrestrial regions by staff participation in policy development and consistency forums.

(13) Strategies for identifying stable funding options to fulfill the mission of the department while reducing dependency on the General Fund.

- Develop, through a series of white papers, long-term funding concepts including:
 - A vehicle registration increase to offset vehicle-based wildlife mortality.
 - Local or regional use fees for non-consumptive wildlife-related equipment and supplies (like the federal CARA effort from a few years ago).
 - Conversion to user-based fees where appropriate.
 - A boating and shipping fee similar to the vehicle registration fee identified above.

(14) Other.

- Request resources to implement the technology necessary to provide equal access to training for remote employees as those who work in more central DFG offices.
- Encourage cross-training between headquarters and regional staff so that policy makers are aware of specific regional issues and vice versa.
- More fully develop capacity within the California Wildlife Foundation ("CWF") to support Department programs.
- Seek authority to sponsor or support legislation to improve and promote the efficient transfer of funding between the Department and CWF.
- Ensure pay equity between wardens and comparable state law enforcement.
- Identify and secure funding sufficient to grow warden force to 1000 officers within 10 years.
- Identify and secure funding to ensure wildlife and fisheries management activities are sufficient to adequately meet the Department's mission.
- Evaluate administrative support roles and functions throughout the Department to ensure sufficient support for functions.