

Alpine Amador Butte Calaveras Colusa
Del Norte El Dorado Glenn Imperial
Inyo Lake Lassen Madera Mariposa



Merced Modoc Mono Napa Nevada Placer
Plumas San Benito Shasta Sierra Siskiyou
Sutter Tehama Trinity Tuolumne Yolo Yuba

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September 8, 2011

Anne Sheehan, Chair
Blue Ribbon Citizen Commission
California Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Sheehan:

On behalf of the thirty-one member counties of the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC), we are pleased to provide preliminary comments regarding the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the California Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision from the perspective of rural local government.

First, we would like to applaud your efforts as well as those of the Executive Committee and the Stakeholder Advisory Group given the enormity of the task as outlined in AB 2376 by Assembly Member Huffman (Chapter 424, Statutes of 2010).

RCRC certainly values the intended goals of AB 2376. To that end, two RCRC member county supervisors – Supervisor Mark Marshall, Colusa County and Supervisor Marty Fortney, Inyo County are members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group. However, RCRC does have significant concerns with the abbreviated time frame in which the California Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision is to be completed. The sheer number of Stakeholder Advisory Group workgroup meetings in addition to those of the Executive Committee and the Blue Ribbon Citizen Commission make it extremely difficult for full participation among the stakeholders.

The remaining comments on the current status of local government working with and the role of the Department will be brief in that almost all of the issues distill down to an issue of resources. RCRC acknowledges the Department has arguably had 'mission creep' over the last couple of decades increasing the duties of the Department. As a result of these additional duties without corresponding funding, the presence of the DFG has significantly diminished in many parts of rural California whether the issue is land management, permitting, wardens or virtually any other area of the Department's responsibility.

For example during the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process on a proposed project there are four alternatives including a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, Environmental Impact Report and an Environmental Document pursuant to a Certified Regulatory Program. In many cases the DFG is not responding at all during the 30 day comment period yet the applicant is required to pay DFG the \$2,044.00 CEQA Document Filing Fee for work that has not been performed. The fee can prove to be onerous to many of our rural county constituents particularly on a small project and our constituents do not feel it is appropriate for the DFG to collect the fee for work that has not been performed.

It is also imperative that when the DFG does engage during the process that there is a balanced and problem solving approach to managing the state's diverse natural resources and needed development for a growing population. The state has 38 million residents and that the population will continue to grow. These new residents will need housing, jobs, schools, water, parks and related infrastructure. RCRC firmly believes that a successful Strategic Vision must recognize these basic human needs.

California has the lowest ratio of wardens per capita of all 50 states and the provinces of Canada. California has approximately 200 wardens while the state of Florida has 700 and Texas has around 500. The dramatic shortage of wardens to adequately cover the state has again meant a significantly reduced presence by the DFG in many parts of rural California and throughout the state.

The failure of the DFG to meet their in lieu fee obligation to counties pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 1504 is another major concern. This section specifies that when income is derived directly from real property acquired and operated by the State as wildlife management areas, the DFG shall pay annually to the county in which the property is located an amount equal to the county taxes levied upon the property at the time title to the property was transferred to the state.

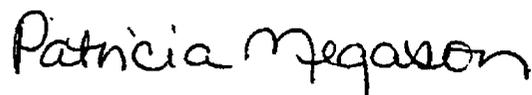
The in lieu fees are intended to offset adverse impacts on county property tax revenue that result when the State acquires private property for wildlife management areas. It is our understanding the DFG is currently in arrears of over \$19 million (*please see attached*).

This shortfall in funding from the DFG to the counties has lead to frustration at the local level, where county officials continue to bear the burden of providing mandated services to public lands that are not subject to local property tax. We are concerned that any further lapses in the payment of the in lieu fees will further exacerbate dissatisfaction with the State's land acquisition policies.

Government at the local, state, and federal level are and will be operating in a fiscally constrained environment for the foreseeable future. It is critical that the DFG seek to eliminate duplication of effort with other agencies at both the state and federal level, establish clear priorities within the Strategic Vision based on today's available resources that reflect a pragmatic problem solving approach to protecting our resources for all of California.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment and RCRC looks forward to working with all the stakeholders as the process moves forward. Please contact Nick Konovaloff with RCRC at (916) 447-4806 or nkonovaloff@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Megason". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patricia Megason
Executive Vice President

Attachments

cc: Members, Blue Ribbon Citizen Commission
John Laird, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency
Carol Baker, Project Director
Supervisor Mark Marshall, Colusa County
Supervisor Marty Fortney, Inyo County

**In-lieu Fees Owed for FY 2009/10
And additional fees owed for FY 2008/09, 2007/08, 2006/07**

| County | 2009/10 Fees | 2008/09 Fees | 2007/08 Fees | 2006/07 Fees |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Alpine | 42,891.32 | 42,891.32 | 42,891.32 | 42,891.32 |
| Butte | 97,272.38 | 97,272.38 | 97,272.38 | 97,272.38 |
| Colusa | 3,551.21 | 3,551.21 | 3,551.21 | 3,551.21 |
| Del Norte | 59,847.50 | 59,816.00 | 58,739.36 | 57,196.13 |
| Fresno | 15,469.24 | 15,469.24 | 15,469.24 | 15,469.24 |
| Glenn | 59,150.37 | 59,150.37 | 59,150.37 | 59,150.37 |
| Humboldt | 35,631.30 | 35,631.30 | 35,330.85 | 33,928.57 |
| Imperial | 8,876.23 | 8,876.23 | 8,876.23 | 8,876.23 |
| Inyo | 858.20 | 858.20 | 858.20 | 858.20 |
| Lake | 16,883.15 | 16,883.15 | 16,883.15 | 16,883.15 |
| Lassen | 65,816.52 | 65,816.52 | 65,816.52 | 65,816.52 |
| Madera | 2,708.21 | 2,708.21 | 2,708.21 | 2,708.21 |
| Marin | 29,856.76 | 29,856.76 | 29,856.76 | 29,856.76 |
| Merced | 88,826.54 | 84,716.95 | 84,716.95 | 84,716.95 |
| Modoc | 45,623.36 | 45,623.36 | 45,623.36 | 45,623.36 |
| Mono | 28,136.19 | 28,136.19 | 28,136.19 | 28,136.19 |
| Monterey | 9,990.82 | 9,705.22 | 9,276.82 | 9,276.82 |
| Napa | 137,544.58 | 135,099.59 | 131,721.74 | 131,721.74 |
| Nevada | 9,131.01 | 9,131.01 | 9,131.01 | 9,131.01 |
| Placer | 15.66 | 15.66 | 15.66 | 15.66 |
| Plumas | 5,948.05 | 5,948.05 | 5,948.05 | 5,948.05 |
| Riverside* | 237,316.44 | 237,316.44 | 237,316.44 | 199,495.33 |
| San Bernardino | 5,488.80 | 5,488.80 | 5,488.80 | 5,488.80 |
| San Diego* | 48,366.54 | 48,366.54 | 48,366.54 | 48,366.54 |
| San Luis Obispo | 38.70 | 38.70 | 38.70 | 38.70 |
| Shasta | 11,651.76 | 10,564.85 | 7,122.96 | 7,122.96 |
| Sierra | 62,557.26 | 62,557.26 | 62,557.26 | 62,557.26 |
| Siskiyou | 51,252.25 | 51,252.25 | 51,252.25 | 51,252.25 |
| Solano | 43,670.77 | 43,670.77 | 43,670.77 | 43,670.77 |
| Sonoma | 19,902.25 | 19,902.25 | 19,902.25 | 19,902.25 |
| Stanislaus | 798.91 | 798.91 | 798.91 | 798.91 |
| Sutter | 20,629.58 | 20,629.58 | 20,629.58 | 20,629.58 |
| Tehama | 7,960.54 | 7,960.54 | 7,960.54 | 7,960.54 |
| Tulare | 444.03 | 444.03 | 444.03 | 444.03 |
| Yolo | 114,510.74 | 114,510.74 | 114,510.74 | 114,510.74 |
| Yuba | 48,668.29 | 46,049.37 | 44,444.23 | 43,950.19 |
| Total | \$1,437,285.46 | \$1,426,707.95 | \$1,416,477.58 | \$1,375,216.92 |

Riverside -- will increase for San Jacinto WA from 06/07 thru 09/10

San Diego doesn't include Hollenbeck Canyon acquisition of 6-23-04 as county would not provide values which will increase fees substantially

In-lieu fees paid and owed from FY 1971-72 through FY 2009-10

Fees will increase due to delay in receiving deeds from WCB

| FY | Paid | Owed | |
|------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| 2009/10 | | 1,437,285 | amount will increase as new parcels are acquired |
| 2008/09 | | 1,426,708 | amount will increase |
| 2007/08 | | 1,416,478 | amount will increase |
| 2006/07 | | 1,375,217 | amount may change |
| 2005/06 | | 1,339,904 | |
| 2004/05 | | 1,298,532 | |
| 2003/04 | | 1,190,282 | |
| 2002/03 | | 1,079,209 | |
| 2001/02 | 582,761 | 884,676 | available funds \$582,761 |
| 2000/01 | 791,237 | 847,847 | baseline \$820,000 |
| 1999/00*** | 785,989 | 821,099 | baseline \$820,000 |
| 1998/99*** | 772,755 | 794,171 | baseline \$820,000 |
| 1997/98* | 791,455 | 791,455 | BCP augmentation |
| 1996/97 | 478,615 | 790,093 | baseline restored to \$520,000 |
| 1995/96 | 443,962 | 764,567 | baseline cut from \$520,000 to \$446,962 |
| 1994/95 | 537,669 | 694,051 | |
| 1993/94 | 514,861 | 674,660 | |
| 1992/93** | 633,137 | 633,137 | |
| 1991/92** | 604,063 | 604,063 | |
| 1990/91** | 538,690 | 538,690 | |
| 1989/90 | 451,902 | \$19,402,124 | amt owed 1990/91 thru 09/10 |
| 1988/89 | 400,474 | | |
| 1987/88 | 76,090 | 1,437,285 | 2009/10 |
| 1986/87 | 171,239 | 1,426,708 | 2008/09 |
| 1985/86 | 88,705 | 1,416,478 | 2007/08 |
| 1984/85 | 99,606 | 1,375,217 | 2006/07 |
| 1983/84 | 118,195 | \$5,655,688 | amt owed 06/07 thru 09/10 |
| 1982/83 | 97,753 | | |
| 1981/82 | 91,195 | | |
| 1980/81 | 51,883 | | |
| 1979/80 | 41,598 | | |
| 1978/79 | 44,348 | | |
| 1977/78 | 56,435 | | |
| 1976/77 | 49,117 | | |
| 1975/76 | 47,137 | | |
| 1974/75 | 46,501 | | |
| 1973/74 | 48,096 | | |
| 1972/73 | 45,884 | | |
| 1971/72 | 46,949 | | |
| | \$9,548,301 | | |

*** counties didn't submit invoice

Baseline was \$520,000 from 1992/93 thru 96/97, but cut to \$446,962 in 95/96

Baseline was \$820,000 from 1998/99 thru 2000/01

2001/02 funds decreased to \$582,761 & only 23 of 36 counties were paid

*A total of \$1,608,902 was paid in 1997/98 including unpaid amounts for 1994/95, 95/96, 96/97

** funds were available in 1992/93 to pay 90/91, 91/92, 92/93, however all counties did not send invoices or mailed them after July 1, 1993, into next FY