



## MEETING MINUTES

**April 24, 2025**

**3800 CORNUCOPIA WAY, ROOM H&I, STANISLAUS BUILDING MODESTO, CA  
95358-9494**

(Agendas can be found online at <http://www.stancounty.com/parks/fish-wildlife-committee.shtm>)

### COUNTY FISH & WILDLIFE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ken Meidl, D4  
Philip McKay, D5  
Michael Hart, D4  
Jim Atherstone, D3  
Vernon Gladney, D1  
Brian Mollard, D2  
Kern Hunewill, D5

### STATE FISH & WILDLIFE REPRESENTATIVE(S):

Bernard Aguilar, CDFW

### PARKS & RECREATION STAFF PRESENT:

Laura Delgadillo – Staff Service  
Technician

### EXCUSED/ABSENT:

Tom Sexton, D1  
Ed Ayers, D2  
Tim Fitzgerald, D3

### GUESTS PRESENT:

Jazmine Velazquez - Field  
Representative for  
Buck Condit, D-1  
Joe Millosovich  
Christian Weaver, Game Warden

### 1. CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS

#### ACTIONS & REPORTER

Phil McKay called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm, and introductions were made of all those in attendance.

*All*

### 2. ENFORCEMENT REPORT

#### ACTIONS & REPORTER

Christian Weaver, one of two the new game warden in Stanislaus County. The Oakdale game warden position is currently open.

*Christian  
Weaver*

### 3. WOODWARD RESERVOIR FISH HABITAT PROJECT

#### ACTIONS & REPORTER

#### Project Planning and Background

Initial steps include identifying materials, tools, and personnel required to implement habitat installation. Over the course of the past few years, various types of fish habitats were explored

#### Site Selection and Logistics

Key tasks include identifying suitable locations, estimating costs for building or purchasing habitats, and determining installation logistics. Locations should be carefully

*Joe  
Millosovich*

selected using the reservoir map, avoiding high-traffic areas and boat launches. Ideal sites include points and coves further from public access. The best areas are adjacent to deeper waters, making them optimal for habitat placement. It is preferable to install large habitats in deep water. The reservoir's water level typically drops between October and March. The upper reservoir is restricted—sealed off from fishing and boating with a dividing wall.

### **Habitat Specifications and Options**

One proposal includes placing a prefabricated 7-foot habitat further offshore. Alternatively, handmade habitats can be constructed using materials such as cinder blocks and PVC pipe. Considerations should include environmental impact and sustainability—ideally, habitats should be made from ecologically safe materials. Buoys can be placed to attract fishermen.

- **Larger habitats:** Less structurally complex; attract game fish.
- **Smaller/artificial habitats:** More complex; offer refuge for smaller fish and juveniles.
- **Spawning areas:** Typically, in 3–4 feet of water; spawning in the lake has likely just begun. Typical spawns for this lake are bluegill and bass.

Pre-made habitats are easier to deploy and generally have a longer lifespan. Two vendors under consideration include MossBack and Honey Hole, though other options may be researched online. Their habitats are made from suitable materials and are designed to blend into natural lake aesthetics.

### **Cost Estimates (Sample Pricing):**

- Grass Beds: \$179 per pack of three (ideal for 4–5 ft water depth)
- Towers: \$299 each (10 ft tall, 7x7 ft base)
- Bulk Purchase: 16-pack Tower habitats are priced at \$4,464.00

Placement suggestions include using two grass beds per tower. Grass beds can also be split. These prefabricated structures require no assembly or added weights—simply drop them from a boat, and they blend naturally into the lake environment.

### **Habitat Configuration Proposal:**

- 2–3 towers placed together
- Grass beds in shallow water, towers nearby in ~20 feet of water
- Select four different points around the lake
- Place four towers at each point, with 2 grass beds adjacent to every tower
- Grass beds attract juvenile fish ("young of the year")
- Towers attract larger target/game fish

### **Lake and Access Considerations**

The lake averages 25 feet in depth and is considered relatively shallow. Boating is currently prohibited due to the presence of invasive golden mussels, so habitats must be deployed using approved methods. Monitoring will be done visually or through fish-spotting methods. While an underwater (aqua) camera could be used, it may disturb fish behavior.

### **Approval and Next Steps**

- Contact Diego Casillas, Reservoir Manager and SSJID for guidance
- Obtain approvals from Diego Casillas and SSJID Board
- Submit a detailed description of habitat types and planned installation locations

### **Next Meeting**

Phil will research additional habitat types and updated cost information, which will be presented at the next scheduled meeting.

### **Motion Passed**

Ken Meidl made a motion to continue researching habitat types and associated costs. Vern Gladney seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

**4. FISHERIES REPORT****ACTIONS & REPORTER***Bernard Aguilar*

The Habitat Restoration Coordinator presented updates received from CDFW river biologists regarding current activities and monitoring efforts in the river systems:

**Coded Wire Tagging (CWT)**

The La Grange CDFW field office is finalizing its coded wire tagging process. The coded wire tags are taken during the salmon carcass surveys. Coded-wire tagging involves inserting a microscopic stainless-steel wire containing a unique code into the nose of each fish at the hatchery, while under a mild anesthesia (CO<sub>2</sub>), when the fish are still small. The fish's fin is clipped to indicate it carries a tag. When these fish return as adults, the clipped fin identifies them as tagged, and the code is read under a microscope—reveals their origin, specifically the location where they spawned. This process also allows researchers to determine the age of each fish.

**Tuolumne River – Adult Salmon Escapement Survey**

All preparations have been completed for the adult salmon escapement carcass survey on the Tuolumne River. Preliminary estimates indicate approximately 784 adult salmon are present in the spawning grounds. While this number is not higher than last year, it exceeds the counts from the previous three drought-impacted years.

**PIT Tag Arrays Installation**

PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tag arrays are being installed upstream from the confluence of the MR and San Joaquin River. These arrays will detect fish carrying PIT tags under their skin, enabling tracking without the need for handling. This technology helps monitor salmon using the central valley rivers before migrating to the ocean and may also detect sturgeon.

Occasionally, stray fish from other river systems are identified through this method.

**Fish Monitoring Infrastructure**

Plans are in place to install two rotary screw traps and two additional traps in the lower Tuolumne River. Installations are pending permits for this year but will proceed next year if necessary.

**Stanislaus River – 2025 Steelhead Redd Surveys**

Steelhead Redd surveys will be conducted weekly from January through April 2025, between Goodwin Dam and Jacob Meyers Park. Surveyors will record counts of live trout and Redds. Measurements of steelhead Redds are conducted according to protocol. Observations of live Lamprey and Lamprey Redds are also noted. Dead trout encountered during surveys are collected for DNA sampling, including scale and otolith analysis.

**Stanislaus River – Spring Monitoring Activities**

Spring post-float surveys on the Stanislaus River began on April 17 and continued through May 28.

**Mossdale Trawl**

Due to staffing constraints, CDFW assumed responsibility for Mossdale Trawl in February. Sampling efforts have been expanded to five days per week through June. Efficiency testing is being conducted weekly by releasing 5,000 tattoo-marked fish at the Mossdale Trawl boat ramp. Chinook and steelhead have been successfully captured thus far.

**Restoration Efforts**

Six habitat restoration projects have been completed. Additional efforts are planned, but their success will depend on funding availability. Biologists noted that while restoration work is effective, its success can be limited in areas with high predator activity.

**5. MINUTES – JANUARY 23, 2025 MEETING****ACTIONS & REPORTER***Phil McKay*

Jim Atherstone made the motion to accept January 23, 2025, minutes. Brian Mollard seconded. The motion was unanimously carried.

|            |  |                                    |
|------------|--|------------------------------------|
| <b>6.</b>  | <b>TREASURER REPORT</b>  | <b>ACTIONS &amp; REPORTER</b>      |
|            | Revenue of \$8.18 was received last month. Current balance is \$58,091.23. No expenditures. Discussed the collection of fine revenue with LT. Justin Gaioan. The recent addition of two new game wardens may contribute to an increase in the number of citations issued and fines collected.  | <i>Kern Hunewill</i>               |
| <b>7.</b>  | <b>CORRESPONDENCE REPORT</b>   | <b>ACTIONS &amp; REPORTER</b>      |
|            | The California Fish and Game Commission has issued a Notice of Proposed Changes to Title 14 regulations—marking the first revision since 1998. The updates clarify the criteria for listing and delisting endangered species and outline the petition process for both adding a species to the list and removing a species that has recovered. These changes are being submitted to the Office of Administrative Law to ensure consistency with the California Fish and Game Code. | <i>Jim Atherstone</i>              |
|            | There is no anticipated significant impact on Stanislaus County.   |                                    |
| <b>8.</b>  | <b>KID FISHING DAY</b>   | <b>ACTIONS &amp; REPORTER</b>      |
|            | The Kid Fishing Day at RecFest was a great success and marked the first time in the Central Valley that trout fishing was offered in a swimming pool setting. Approximately 200 trout were provided by the hatchery and placed in a specially prepared, non-chlorinated pool. The fish were actively feeding on PowerBait, which made for an engaging experience.  | <i>Phil McKay<br/>Micheal Hart</i> |
|            | The event required coordination among several organizations to secure the pool, fishing poles and equipment, volunteers, and suitable water for the trout. Despite the many moving parts, all involved worked together efficiently to create an enjoyable experience for the participants.   |                                    |
|            | Around 150 fish were caught, and both children and parents expressed excitement and satisfaction with the event. A secure platform was also constructed to allow young children to safely observe the fish swimming in the pool, enhancing the overall educational and recreational value.   |                                    |
|            | Although only \$160 was invested in the event as a precaution in case of low turnout, the outcome exceeded expectations. Expressed interest in hosting similar events in the future, as it provided a meaningful and unique opportunity for children to fish—many for the first time.  |                                    |
|            | The success of this event also inspired ideas for future programs, such as a Kids Fishing Day at Knights Ferry and an Earth Day-themed event.  |                                    |
| <b>9.</b>  | <b>WOOD DUCK PROJECT REPORT</b>  | <b>ACTIONS &amp; REPORTER</b>      |
|            | Checked the nest boxes and observed a decline in the number of eggs, though the cause is currently unknown. At the Dos Rios site, boxes were relocated to areas with less foot traffic, which may have influenced nesting activity. Additionally, fox squirrels appear to be occupying some of the boxes. Will explore alternative installation methods, such as mounting the boxes on poles, to help address these issues.  | <i>Phil McKay</i>                  |
| <b>10.</b> | <b>ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD 2024</b>  | <b>ACTIONS &amp; REPORTER</b>      |
|            | Ken Meidi has agreed to assist with the award process this year. A subcommittee has been formed and is currently exploring methods for evaluating nominees, whether by groups or an alternative approach. The goal is to review all nominees and select a recipient by the next meeting, so the award can be presented at the October meeting.   | <i>Phil McKay</i>                  |
| <b>11.</b> | <b>STANISLAUS COUNT PHOTO CONTEST</b>  | <b>ACTIONS &amp; REPORTER</b>      |
|            | Mike Hart has agreed to lead the contest, focusing on its organization and structure. Mike   | <i>Michael Hart</i>                |

has consulted with several individuals, including marketing professionals and a former local camera shop owner, to gather ideas on how to run a competitive contest on a limited budget and encourage youth participation. One option being considered is limiting the contest to amateur photographers. The tentative target date for the event is either next fall or spring.

## 12. QUAIL GUZZLERS

### ACTIONS & REPORTER

If there is interest in planning an outing, we could visit the canyon to assess its current condition following the recent fire. The visit could also include a cleanup effort and lunch. At this point, the park's availability and best timing are uncertain, so it will be necessary to contact the park manager for more information. The committee appears interested. Once the manager is contacted, we can propose a potential date and send out an email to gauge interest and potential attendance for the scouting visit.

*Vernon Gladney*

## 13. OTHER BUSINESS

### ACTIONS & REPORTER

- The 2024 Salmon Fest calendar which was purchased by the committee was circulated to look over.

*Phil McKay*

## 14. ADJOURNMENT & NEXT MEETING

### ACTIONS & REPORTER

There being no further business, Vernon Gladney motioned to adjourn the meeting and Jim Atherstone seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Fish and Wildlife Committee will be held on:

*Phil McKay*

**Next Meeting: July 24, 2025, at 4 PM**

**Rooms H&I, Stanislaus Building  
3800 Cornucopia Way, Modesto, CA 95358**

Prepared by: Michelle Roberts, Secretary

Agendas can also be found online at subject to staff's ability to post prior to the meeting. Materials related to an item on this agenda submitted to the Commission after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection during normal business hours at the main office of the Department of Parks and Recreation, 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite D, Modesto, CA 95358



**STANISLAUS COUNTY**  
PARKS & RECREATION

*Tera Chumley, Director  
Phil McKay, Chair*