STANISLAUS COUNTY
FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMITTEE

3800 CORNUCOPIA WAY, SUITE D, MODESTO, CA 95358

MEETING MINUTES

April 23, 2026
3800 Cornucopia Way, Stanislaus Building, Room H-I
Modesto, CA 95358

COUNTY FISH & WILDLIFE MEMBERS PRESENT:	STATE FISH & WILDLIFE REPRESENTATIVE(S):	PARKS & RECREATION STAFF PRESENT:
Tom Sexton, D1 Vernon Gladney, D1 Brian Mollard, D2 Bernard Aguilar, D2 Tim Fitzgerald, D3 Jim Atherstone, D3 Michael Hart, D4 Kenneth Meidl, D4 Philip McKay, D5 Kern Hunewill, D5	Chinnu Xiong - CDFW Mark Abraham - CDFW	Sena Tath – Secretary

EXCUSED/ABSENT:	GUESTS PRESENT:
Harley Radcliffe	None

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.	FISHERIES REPORT	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• Tagging 200,000 juvenile Chinook salmon with coded wire tags, to be released into the delta in May. • Tattooing 40,000 fish for the Mossdale trout fishing trial. • Salmon release involves trucking the fish to the delta, with further details pending. • Chris is conducting research on the lower Merced River using a rotary screw trap. • Estimating juvenile Chinook salmon migration over a decade since last monitoring. • Unpredictable river flows present a challenge, but several fish have been captured. • 22 screw traps are in place on tributaries, with future monitoring planned. • Traps also capture other fish species and occasionally plant seeds.	*Bernard Aguilar*

3.	WILDLIFE REPORT	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• Wildlife biologists discussed deer and bear management, with collaring and population modeling leading to more bear tags. • Turlock Lake may reopen for hunting, and community events are planned as Woodward Reservoir management shifts to the irrigation district. Efforts to control Canada goose populations face logistical issues. • Recent activity includes mountain lion relocations, unconfirmed cub sightings, and investigations into barn owl and fox deaths, which lab results attribute to heat, not poison. The commission monitors wildlife mortality and manages hunter access through Share and PLM programs, which are seeing increased requests in Stanislaus and Merced Counties. • PLM lets landowners sell or keep tags, requires habitat improvements, and offers hunting flexibility; the commission is updating its handbook and increasing transparency. Deer damage to almond orchards is an issue, and declining deer populations are linked to bear predation, regulations, habitat loss, and forest management. • Bear numbers have grown and impacted deer survival. Changes in hunting practices altered bear harvests and behavior. High deer densities in orchards and cities raise Chronic Wasting Disease concerns, though recent samples show no positives and monitoring continues, including live surveillance. • Wolf management operates independently with limited data and little confirmed activity in Stanislaus and Tuolumne Counties. Wolves are tracked by moving between regions, facing natural challenges like mange.	*Mark Abraham*

4.	ENFORCEMENT REPORT	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	Absent	*Harley Radcliffe*

5.	WOODWARD RESERVOIR FISH HABITAT PROJECT UPDATE	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• The Woodward Reservoir Fish Habitat Project aims to enhance fish habitat • Discussions on the ideal location (Area 1) and types of habitat structures to purchase or build. • The committee authorized a $3,000 budget for materials, pending approval from the state water board to ensure compliance with drinking water standards. • Commercially available structures are favored due to their certification, but the option to build remains if standards are met. • The committee will seek quotes and proceed based on budget and compliance. • Concerns raised about the need to improve fish populations to attract anglers, especially given new regulations limiting boat access to Woodward Reservoir. • Comparisons made to other reservoirs with better fish stock, emphasizing the importance of habitat enhancement. • Operational changes at Woodward Reservoir were discussed, including staffing and management transitions, and requirements for a new spillway mandated by the state.	*Phil McKay*

6.	WILDLIFE PHOTO CONTEST UPDATE	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• The 2026 wildlife photo contest was not held due to organizational challenges. • Plans are underway to reboot the contest for 2027, with collaboration sought from Stanislaus Arts Council and a more structured timeline for funding requests. • The contest aims to build support for wildlife in Stanislaus County. • Local media and new partners like the Farm Bureau may be included.	*Michael Hart*

7.	WOOD DUCKS UPDATE	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• Mike and Phil met with David Martin at Creekside Golf Course to discuss a field study program for Modesto Junior College (MJC) biology students. • The program focuses on wood ducks in the riparian habitat of Dry Creek. • Aims to foster student engagement in wildlife coexistence studies. • Potential for monitoring via wildlife cameras and research on nesting boxes. • The committee is facilitating partnership and encouraging practical courses and fieldwork opportunities for students.	*Phil McKay*

8.	QUAIL GUZZLER UPDATE	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• The committee recently visited Frank Raines Regional Park as part of ongoing efforts to support quail populations. • Installation and maintenance of guzzlers are being carried out to aid quail habitat. • Only one guzzler is currently in place; it is old and difficult to access by foot. • Ben Lewis, upland game bird biologist for the Department of Fish and Wildlife, reported the department has purchased eight guzzlers. • The committee may obtain one or two guzzlers for installation in Frank Raines Regional Park. • Ben provided a map to identify suitable locations, which will be circulated among committee members. • The team discussed placing a guzzler in a lower area accessible by vehicle, possibly below the road to benefit from rainwater during the rainy season. • Ben has access to a mini excavator to prepare the site for installation. • Installation sites are on county-owned property, requiring permission from the Parks Department. • The committee discussed their interest in pursuing the project, agreeing that monitoring would likely not be necessary. • The guzzler would provide water for quail and other wildlife during dry periods. • If the Department of Fish and Wildlife supplies the guzzler and equipment, the main committee requirement is manpower. • The project would not significantly impact on the committee's budget. • There was discussion about accessibility and safety, including concerns about steep roads and potential damage from off-road vehicles or motorcycles. • Suggestions were made to locate guzzlers in places protected from such risks and where natural cover would conceal them quickly. • A motion was made and seconded to proceed with the project; the committee voted in favor and the motion carried. • Next steps include contacting Ben Lewis to confirm guzzler availability, obtaining permission from the Parks Department, and coordinating manpower for installation. • The committee will begin looking for suitable locations and start the process of site preparation and installation.	*Phil McKay*

9.	2025 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• Subcommittee reflected on last year's recipient, Dos Rios. • Considered groups such as River Park and Riverfront Park. • Noted organizations that stand out for innovative and impactful work. • The Wildlife Center was last year's runner-up; it was deemed appropriate to recognize them as this year's winner. • A motion was made to select the Stanislaus County Wildlife Care Center for the award; the motion was second and a vote was conducted. • All members in favor; the motion carried unanimously. • The committee discussed recognition options: certificate versus plaque. • After consideration of preferences and constraints, decided to hold the ceremony at	*Phil McKay*

	the next committee meeting in July. • The environmental award is not limited to nonprofits; any group or business demonstrating significant environmental work in Stanislaus County is eligible. • Committee welcomes suggestions for future nominees from members.	
10.	**COMMITTEE LOGO CHANGE**	**ACTIONS & REPORTER**
	• The need for a logo update was driven by the wildlife photography contest, where the current logo does not fit well alongside others and lacks distinctive shape. • Multiple logo ideas were considered, with input from Mike and acknowledgment of the committee's tradition of featuring wood ducks. • Members expressed preferences for combining elements from different logo designs, such as wording from the upper left and imagery from the lower right. • There was debate about including the word "committee" in the logo, with AI-generated designs initially omitting it. • Suggestions included adding fish imagery and background water to new logo designs and possibly incorporating more color. • Concerns about copyright and rights to the logo were addressed; it was confirmed that the AI-generated designs are original creations. • The committee moved to change the logo and decided to table the final decision until the next meeting, encouraging members to try creating their own AI-generated versions for a gallery walk and vote.	*Michael Hart*
11.	**COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON NOMINATION**	**ACTIONS & REPORTER**
	• The current chairperson's four-year term concluded as of today. • Tim nominated Michael Hart, and Tom seconded the nomination. • A motion was made and seconded to select Michael Hart as the next chairperson. • The motion carried, and Michael Hart was congratulated as the new chairperson.	*Phil McKay*
12.	**MINUTES FROM JANUARY 22, 2026 MEETING**	**ACTIONS & REPORTER**
	• Committee reviewed the January 22, 2026 minutes included in the meeting packet. • Suggested change to list Bernard as both a representative and committee person. • No corrections, comments, or concerns were raised. • The motion was made by Tom and seconded by Brian. • The group voted to approve the minutes; there were no objections; minutes carried.	*Phil McKay*
13.	**TREASURER REPORT**	**ACTIONS & REPORTER**
	• The treasury report was reviewed and confirmed to be current. • Recent expenditures included $2,935.36 for reimbursement related to Take a Kid Fishing Day. • The club earned $20.00 over the past three months. • The current balance stands at $54,009.55. • There is sufficient money available, but some will be spent on the upcoming fish habitat project. • Guidelines exist in the bylaws regarding annual spending limits and minimum balances, restricting large donations (e.g., $20,000.00). • The propagation fund usage is defined by a list of 14 permitted items, which was recently updated.	*Kern Hunewill*

14.	CORRESPONDENCE REPORT	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• There was mention of checking an existing account and comparing similarities, possibly regarding correspondence or records. • The conversation shifted to the Fish and Game Commission and changes proposed, including regulatory adjustments and opportunities for harvest on the Sacramento River. • Discussion included bag and possession limits, with some clarification that these changes would not impact certain counties.	*Jim Atherstone*

15.	OTHER BUSINESS	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	• Recognition and appreciation were expressed by individuals who assisted, such as providing water for an event, with plans to issue certificates of appreciation. • Committee members discussed restoration efforts and new issues, particularly the spring run of salmon and its potential impact on river management and regulations. • There were questions and comments about staffing, restoration, and the handling of the spring run as a nonessential, experimental population, which may affect endangered species qualifications and incidental take allowances. • The business session ended with requests for any other committee business, but no additional items were raised.	*Phil McKay*

16.	ADJOURNMENT & NEXT MEETING	ACTIONS & REPORTER
	There being no further business, Tom motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Tim seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Fish and Wildlife Committee will be held on: **October 22,2026 at 4:00 PM** **Rooms H&I, Stanislaus Building** **3800 Cornucopia Way, Modesto, CA 95358**	*Phil McKay*

Prepared by: Sena Tath, Secretary

Agendas can also be found online at https://www.stancounty.com/parks/fish-wildlife-committee.shtm 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