



MEETING MINUTES

January 22, 2026

**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:

Tom Sexton, D1
Tim Fitzgerald, D3
Philip McKay, D5
Michael Hart, D4
Kern Hunewill, D5
Ken Meidl, D4
Jim Atherstone, D3
Bernard Aguilar, D2

STATE FISH & WILDLIFE REPRESENTATIVE(S):

Sarah McCulloch – CDFW
La Grange Field Office

PARKS & RECREATION STAFF PRESENT:

Sena Tath – Secretary
Tera Chumley – Director of Parks and Recreation
Laura Delgadillo – Staff Service Technician

EXCUSED/ABSENT:

Brian Mollard, D2
Vernon Gladney, D1

GUESTS PRESENT:

Tommy Grove - CDFW
John Driver – Stanislaus Fly Fishers

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. CDFW – NUTRIA UPDATE

ACTIONS & REPORTER

- Species: Semi-aquatic rodent from South America; smaller than beaver, larger than muskrat.
- Reproduction: Mature at 4–6 months; up to 3 litters/year (6–12 offspring); rapid population growth.
- Impact:
 - Wetlands: Destroys marsh vegetation, converts to open water.
 - Infrastructure: Burrows (3–150 ft) damage levees, canals, aqueducts.
- California Response:
 - Rediscovered in 2017 (Merced County); eradication program launched 2019.
 - As of Oct: 7, 2025, 512 removed; 2 million acres surveyed; 20 counties involved; 1,005 in Stanislaus.
- Hotspots: Stanislaus & Merced early infestations; now less than 20 captures/year locally.
- Current focus: Delta & Volta Wildlife Area.

Thomas Grove

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges: Unknown reintroduction source; no major predators; prefers cattails/tule marshes. • Public Role: Report sightings (photos/videos) via California Department of Fish & Wildlife or nutria@wildlife.ca.gov. • Outlook: Eradication still possible; continued monitoring/trapping essential. 	
<p>3. FUNDING REQUEST – STANISLAUS FLY FISHERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 1.5 years ago, the club noticed outdated or missing signage on rivers, causing confusion about fishing regulations. • The club designed and installed new signs for the Tuolumne River, working with Steve Tsao (CA Fish & Wildlife) to ensure correct regulations were included. • Signs to inform anglers about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Steelhead card requirement ○ Barbless hooks ○ Catch-and-release rules (except hatchery trout) • 20 signs were produced and mostly installed at river access points. • Positive feedback from game wardens, who say it aids enforcement and reduces excuses. • A funding request was made to approve the cost for Stanislaus River Signs. Cost: \$589.18 (invoice available from signs.com). Tom Sexton made a motion to approve the expenditure and Jim Atherstone seconded. The motion was approved. • Signs include pictures (e.g., adipose fin) and QR codes for regulations. • Wardens report less poaching since signs went up; club open to expanding signage to valley parks for general rules and litter prevention. • Club also organized cleanup efforts (e.g., Turlock Lake campground), removing large amounts of trash and tires. 	<p>ACTIONS & REPORTER <i>John Driver</i></p>
<p>4. SALMON FESTIVAL, KNIGHTS FERRY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids Calendar Art Contest: Previously funded by the group; now self-sustaining and growing in popularity. • Kids Fishing Event: Organized by the committee; highly successful and likely contributed to doubling attendance. • Attendance: Estimated 6,268 people (about double last year), possibly the highest ever for the festival. • Food Vendors: Increased number; all sold out by 1 PM despite having more than previous years. • Nonprofit Opportunities: Nonprofits (e.g., Boy Scouts, Lions Club, Kiwanis, 4-H) can sell food at no charge; for-profit vendors pay a small fee. • Exhibitors: Similar number as last year; some federal entities were absent. Fly fishing education remains popular. • Growth Limitations: Venue size restricts further growth; parking was managed successfully with help from 50s Roadhouse and TID employee Pat Maloney. • Demographics: About one-third of attendees were kids. • Feedback: Very positive, especially regarding the fishing event. Committee hopes to participate again in 2026. 	<p>ACTIONS & REPORTER <i>Sara McCulloch</i></p>
<p>5. TURLOCK & WOODWARD RESERVOIR UPDATES</p> <p>Turlock Lake</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements among three entities (including State) nearly finalized; board meeting in March expected. • Vision: Family-friendly, seasonal day-use with rentals (kayaks, paddleboards), fishing access, possible floating water park. Speedboats/jet skis remain at Modesto. • State investing \$8M+ infrastructure: safety upgrades, ADA ramps, restrooms, 	<p>ACTIONS & REPORTER <i>Tera Chumley</i></p>

<p>surveillance trailer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law enforcement coordination ongoing. <p>Woodward Reservoir</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiations with SSJID for property acquisition; SSJID to take over recreation by Oct 15, 2026. • SSJID requested contracts/permits, plans RFP for concessionaire. • SCFWC Meeting scheduled for Feb 4 with SSJID board members re: habitat creation for fishing. 	
<p>6. FISHERIES REPORT</p>	<p>ACTIONS & REPORTER</p>
<p>Fishing Report & Carcass Survey (2025)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys ended Dec 15, with some delays due to high flow/turbidity. • Tuolumne River: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strong spring-run Chinook return (San Joaquin River Restoration Program). ○ Preliminary counts: 919 spring-run, 2,072 fall-run — highest since 2003. • Stanislaus & Merced Rivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Significant activity; totals pending. • Data is preliminary, full results forthcoming. <p>Restoration Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements are likely tied to LaGrange reclamation work. • Basso restoration project (Eagles area) scheduled for summer; DWR funding confirmed. 	<p><i>Bernard Aguilar</i></p>
<p>7. COMMITTEE WILDLIFE PHOTO CONTEST</p>	<p>ACTIONS & REPORTER</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: County-wide contest with Stanislaus Arts Council and Visit Modesto, modeled after Almond Blossom Tour. • Timeline: Announce April 10, 2026; awards at year-end (venue: Art Gallery or State Theater). • Roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arts Council: Organize, design maps/materials. ○ Fish & Wildlife: Ensure wildlife integrity; judges include biologist Mark Abrams. ○ Technical advisors to address AI/photo authenticity. • Tour Component: Maps of wildlife areas with QR codes; tie-ins with local businesses. • Financials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Total estimate: \$25,500. ○ Committee approved \$1,143.19 for printing, seeking sponsors (e.g., Outside Magazine). 	<p><i>Michael Hart</i></p>
<p>8. WOOD DUCKS</p>	<p>ACTIONS & REPORTER</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status: Approximately 31–33 boxes installed (Dos Rios, Tuolumne River, Dry Creek). • Monitoring: Nesting mid-Jan to May/June; check monthly; cleaned at season start. • Expense: Some small costs noted for shavings and hardware. • Next Steps: Continue monitoring and maintenance. 	<p><i>Phil McKay</i></p>
<p>9. COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON NOMINATION</p>	<p>ACTIONS & REPORTER</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current chair announced intention to step down after 4 years of service. • Next Steps: At the April 23, 2026 meeting, nominations and voting for a new chairperson will take place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The newly elected chair will assume responsibilities in the following quarter (likely July 2026). • Current chair will remain on the committee after stepping down. 	Phil McKay
10. MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 23, 2025 MEETING	ACTIONS & REPORTER
<p>Approval of October 23, 2025 Meeting Minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee reviewed the October 23, 2025 minutes included in the meeting packet. • No corrections, comments, or concerns were raised. • A motion to approve the minutes was made by Jim and seconded by Tom. • Vote passed unanimously; minutes approved. 	Phil McKay
11. TREASURER REPORT	ACTIONS & REPORTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Revenue: Received \$102 (covers about two years of prior collections), which is an improvement over previous amount. • Recent Expenses: Two reimbursements for Kids Fishing Day totaling approximately \$2,081 (previously approved budget was \$2,500). • Current Balance: \$55,800 before today's meeting. • Upcoming Expense: Plan to build a 4th fishing platform (currently have 3) to improve event capacity; estimated cost is only about two hundred dollars. 	Kern Hunewill
12. CORRESPONDENCE REPORT	ACTIONS & REPORTER
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ventana Wildlife Society Donation Request <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Requested funds for California Condor conservation (non-lead ammo distribution and education). ◦ Committee declined: program is outside county scope, hard to track, possibly not aligned with bylaws. Chair will send a response. 2. Fish & Game Commission Regulation Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sport-Caught Fish Processing Permits: Rename section; allow donations to nonprofits; adds liability. No local impact. ◦ Commercial Shrimp Regulations: Emergency depth and seasonal limits made permanent to prevent whale entanglement. Applies to coastal areas only; no local impact. ◦ Action: Informational only; no response needed unless future local impact. 	Jim Atherstone
13. OTHER BUSINESS – QUAIL GUZZLERS	ACTIONS & REPORTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to revisit Del Puerto Canyon to inspect and clean remaining guzzlers (2–3 functional out of 5). • Parks Department available Thu–Sun; visit should occur in spring before poison oak season. Date flexible due to weather. • Activities: inspection, maintenance, possible upgrades; include barbecue lunch. • Support: Wildlife biologist Ben Lewis offered help and potential funding; new guzzler designs available. • Next Step: Set tentative date (cancel if rain). 	Phil McKay

14. ADJOURNMENT & NEXT MEETING

ACTIONS & REPORTER

There being no further business, Jim Atherstone motioned to adjourn the meeting and Tim Fitzgerald seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:41 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Fish and Wildlife Committee will be held on:

Phil McKay

Next Meeting: April 23, 2026, at 4 PM
Rooms H&I, Stanislaus Building
3800 Cornucopia Way, Modesto, CA 95358

Prepared by: Sena Tath, 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