



February 20, 2018

Holly Mitchell, Chair
Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Phil Ting, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Bob Wieckowski, Chair
Senate Budget Sub 2 Cmte
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Richard Bloom, Chair
Assembly Budget Sub 3 Cmte
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support Governor's Proposed 2018-19 Budget for the Department of Fish and Wildlife

Dear Senators Mitchell and Wieckowski and Assemblymembers Ting and Bloom,

California's natural resources both belong to and are enjoyed by all. We also have a duty to conserve them for future generations. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)—whose mission it is to “manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public”—continues to face multiple challenges including human population growth, decreasing participation in recreational hunting and fishing, and increased responsibilities (unfunded mandates).

We represent hunters, fishermen, and conservationists in California who recognize the importance of an adequately funded CDFW. Our members, the licenses they purchase to pursue these activities, and the sales taxes they pay on outdoor goods and gear form the backbone of conservation funding in California. Our organizations supported the Strategic Vision Stakeholder Advisory Group formed under the authority of AB 2376 (Huffman) in 2010. When this group was reconvened in 2017 to discuss long-term sustainable revenue possibilities and to help identify expenditure priorities for CDFW, we participated in these discussions that helped shape recommendations that were intended to help CDFW effectively carry out its mission into the future.

We believe some of the financial pressures facing the Department stem from policies and regulations that are annually reducing the number of hunters and anglers in California. Additionally, we are concerned that some proposals on the table to “correct” the funding imbalance further exacerbate the situation by suggesting higher license fees, sales tax increments on hunting and angling gear and supplies, and other mechanisms that target the one community that already bears the significant cost of funding Department priorities.

We believe the Governor's Budget Change Proposal (3600-016-BCP-GB) for FY 2018-19 is a step in the right direction to provide additional necessary funding for critical CDFW programs from fund sources with a clear nexus to fish and wildlife. This proposal also resolves the structural imbalance in the Fish and Game Preservation Fund with proposed ongoing funding. Most importantly, it does not go back to the very hunters and anglers who already shoulder a large share of Department costs through their engagement in these recreational activities.

We share a common concern for the conservation and welfare of California's fish and wildlife and the habitats upon which they depend. We have long recognized that to effectively discharge CDFW's wide-ranging responsibilities, the Department must rely on a consistent source of revenue. Therefore, we are in strong support for the Governor's Budget Change Proposal (3600-016-BCP-GB) for FY 2018-19 for the Department of Fish and Wildlife and ask that you vote to approve this budget proposal. We will be activating our supporters and members around the state to engage their lawmakers in support of the Governor's proposal to increase investment in the conservation and management of our fish and wildlife resources.

Thank you,

California Waterfowl Association
Ducks Unlimited
Grassland Water District
Northern California Guides and Sportsmen's Association

Cc: Senate President pro tem Kevin de Leon
Incoming Senate President pro tem Toni Atkins
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
Members of the Senate and Assembly Budget committees
Chuck Bonham, Director, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Democratic and Republican staff of the Senate and Assembly Budget committees