

(Fish and Wildlife Scientific Aids); seven vehicles; specialized equipment (one-time), such as dart guns, live traps, drones, and animal transport crates; and specialized equipment (ongoing), such as supplies for live animal care, wildlife health and disease surveillance supplies, bear mats, and immobilization supplies and telemetry (such as satellite collars, ear tags, and camera traps). For more information related to these costs, see the background below.

CDFW's service-based budgeting (SBB) analysis for FY 2023-24 indicates that CDFW's species and habitat conservation division is funded only for 34% of its mission; within that branch, the human-wildlife-conflict management program is particularly underfunded. CDFW's law enforcement division is funded for only 33% of its mission.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

[This bill] is about protecting both our communities and the wildlife that call the San Gabriel Valley home. As bear encounters become more frequent, we must act with care and foresight to ensure the safety of our families while respecting the natural habitat of these animals. This bill establishes a thoughtful and proactive approach—one that prioritizes understanding bear behavior, reducing conflicts in residential areas, and using innovative technology to monitor and manage interactions. By planning ahead and implementing smart, humane solutions, we can create a safer, more harmonious coexistence between people and wildlife.

2) **Background.** Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) occurs when humans and wild animals interact in an unwanted or unsafe way. Population growth and a changing climate is increasing the frequency and severity of HWC as wildlife encounter humans more often in their search for food, shelter, and water. As the state's trustee agency for fish and wildlife resources, CDFW serves as the lead agency charged with helping to resolve HWC.

The black bear is the only bear species living in California today. Black bears provide many ecosystem benefits by serving as seed dispersers, scavengers, and predators. Black bears may cause concern due to property damage, loss of small livestock or pets, or public safety as they search for food, as they can become habituated to and lose their fear of humans. According to CDFW's 2024 Black Bear Conservation Plan for California, the Lake Tahoe Basin and the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains are among the hotspots for HWC.

The Budget Act of 2021 allocated \$7 million (General Fund) to CDFW to further its HWC response efforts. CDFW utilized this one-time funding to hire and train limited-term wildlife conflict specialists serving all 58 California counties to track, respond, and address HWC; improve wildlife incident responses; and foster increased understanding and awareness of native wildlife to support safe coexistence. According to CDFW, in FY 2022-23, the department logged over 40,000 staff hours responding to more than 20,000 wildlife incident reports and 3,300 depredation reports. In FY 2023-24, CDFW logged over 60,000 staff hours responding to more than 45,000 wildlife incident reports and 3,500 depredation reports.

In 2024, in response to an increase in human-bear encounters in the region, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion requesting that CDFW add

more experts specializing in HBC and decrease response times. The motion also notes that CDFW's statewide approach to addressing HBC does not meet the specific needs of Sierra Madre, Monrovia, and other San Gabriel Valley communities, and calls for a targeted, regional response plan.

CDFW notes the staff and resources needed to implement this bill will help facilitate complex, time-sensitive, and high-profile incident response in the San Gabriel Valley, particularly because the likelihood of a successful capture after a long delay is low. Wildlife capture specialist teams comprised of permanent staff with chemical immobilization certification will be required to provide field incident response; conduct capture events; manage highly specialized equipment; manage the appropriate disposition of bears; and conduct post-release monitoring of bears. Staff will need to concurrently develop the required plan; provide ongoing consultation to cities for adherence to the plan; and undertake efforts to tag, relocate, and track bears that enter a residential neighborhood in cities and other affected areas – regardless of the risk posed by the bear. CDFW's law enforcement division's increased workload will likely include coordination of staff response, investigation and reporting of wildlife incidents, coordination with wildlife laboratories, community outreach, and coordination with local municipalities regarding analysis and potential implementation of relevant local ordinances and procedures.

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