
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Monique Limón, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1169	Hearing Date:	July 16, 2025
Author:	Jeff Gonzalez		
Version:	May 23, 2025 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Katharine Moore		

Subject: Wildlife grants: Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement program

SUMMARY

This bill would raise the compensation available to a landowner who participates in the Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) program, which offers hunting and fishing opportunities, to \$52 per acre or \$87 per public participant for the 2026 calendar year and index the compensation limit thereafter, among other provisions.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

CDFW is the state trustee agency for the state's fish, wildlife, and plant species; CDFW's mission statement 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." CDFW regulates sport fishing and hunting in California.

The SHARE program

AB 396 (Harman, Chapter 394, Statutes of 2003) established the SHARE program (Fish and Game Code (FGC) §§1570 *et seq.*). It allows landowners (e.g., private landowners, non-profits, or government agencies) to make their lands available to the public for hunting, fishing, or recreational activities in exchange for economic incentives and liability protection, under specified conditions. Access permits are awarded by random draw through CDFW's online license service. California's lands cover approximately 101 million acres and over half of that is privately owned. The goal of SHARE is to provide public access to private or otherwise landlocked public land through collaborative partnerships with landowners. A landowner may have interest in participating in the SHARE program because of the financial incentive, as a method to relieve wildlife damage on their property, or simply to expand areas available for recreational activities. Maximum compensation to the landowner is calculated as up to \$30 per acre or up to \$50 per participant. Acreage and participant compensation rates were set in 2003 and 2009, respectively.

Hunters who wish to participate in a SHARE hunt apply online and each application for a specific hunt is \$14.86. Recent SHARE participation data is shown in the table below. Information about each SHARE hunt is available on CDFW's website – such as the specific species, day or days of the hunt, and any restrictions imposed by the landowner. For elk, there were 59 SHARE hunt opportunities for a total of 93 animals. The application acceptance rate was generally low (less than 1%), but overall hunter

success at hunting and taking an elk last year was pretty good – almost 75%. There are additional SHARE hunt opportunities for waterfowl, dove, pheasant, quail, deer, wild pig, turkey, and bear. According to the Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee, there are 15 counties with properties in the SHARE program, mostly in Humboldt County. There was one SHARE sport fishing opportunity listed, although it is currently closed. CDFW’s website identified at least 4 hunts as “new”.

year	Hunters or hunters/anglers	Applications to SHARE hunting opportunities	Applications to SHARE fishing opportunities
2023	6,764	45,982	n/a
2024	5,975	40,911	493

CDFW awarded 293 and 329 access permits via random draw under the SHARE program in 2023 and 2024, respectively.

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes CDFW in the California Natural Resources Agency.
 - a) CDFW’s mission 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.”
- 2) Provides that various types of hunting licenses be issued subject to certain terms and conditions. A hunting license grants the privilege to take birds and mammals.
 - a) CDFW is required to issue an annual resident hunting license and other hunting licenses to those who meet the requirements to hold the license and pay applicable fees. The annual hunting license is valid for a term of one year from July 1 to June 30, inclusive, or, if issued after the beginning of the license year, for the remainder of the license year. The 2025/2026 resident annual hunting license is \$62.90. (FGC §3031)
- 3) Requires a hunter to purchase any applicable tags, stamps, permits, and other required authorizations to take certain game animals in season or to participate in certain hunts.
- 4) Establishes the SHARE program (FGC §§1570 *et seq.*)
 - a) States legislative intent to encourage private landowners to voluntarily make their land available to the public for wildlife-dependent recreational activities.
 - b) Requires CDFW to work in partnership with nonprofit conservation groups and others to cooperatively implement the program in order to facilitate public access to private lands, as provided. Requires CDFW to adopt regulations for the management and control of recreational activities on participating lands.

- c) Prohibits any General Fund monies from being used for SHARE. Requires all user fees and other funds in the SHARE Account to be used solely for programs and projects to benefit the SHARE program and CDFW direct costs and administrative overhead associated with the program. Authorizes funds to be used for wildlife conservation purposes on lands participating in the program.
- d) Authorizes CDFW to make grants to, or enter into agreements with, nonprofit organizations, governmental entities or other entities for the use of the funds when CDFW finds that the agreements are necessary.
- e) Authorizes CDFW to reimburse an entity for costs associated with the implementation of the program, as provided.
- f) Authorizes CDFW to enter into a voluntary agreement with a private landowner to provide public access for wildlife-dependent recreational activities. Prohibits financial compensation offered to a private landowner to exceed \$30 per acre or \$50 per public participant per day, as provided.

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would raise the compensation available to a landowner who participates in the SHARE program to \$52 per acre or \$87 per public participant for the 2026 calendar year and index the compensation limit thereafter, among other provisions.

Specifically, this bill would:

- 1) Require, instead of authorize, CDFW to make grants or enter into agreements with conservation-oriented nonprofit organizations, or others, as provided, when CDFW finds that the grants or agreements are necessary for carrying out the purposes of this article.
- 2) Add services to implement the SHARE program as an item that CDFW is authorized to reimburse a nonprofit organization, a private landowner, or other entity for.
- 3) Raise the limit on financial compensation to a private landowner to \$52 per acre or \$87 per public participant per day for the 2026 calendar year and authorize indexing annually thereafter, as provided.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, "AB 1169 is crafted to help support and expand the number of outdoor recreation opportunities offered to the public through the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement Program. This valuable program provides members of our community with access to private lands for the purposes of hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities. Access to quality outdoor recreation is imperative, and I am proud to author this Bill ensuring it grows."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None received

COMMENTS

The maximum compensation limit per acre was established in 2003. If the limits had reflected inflation over the last 20 years, landowners would be reimbursed

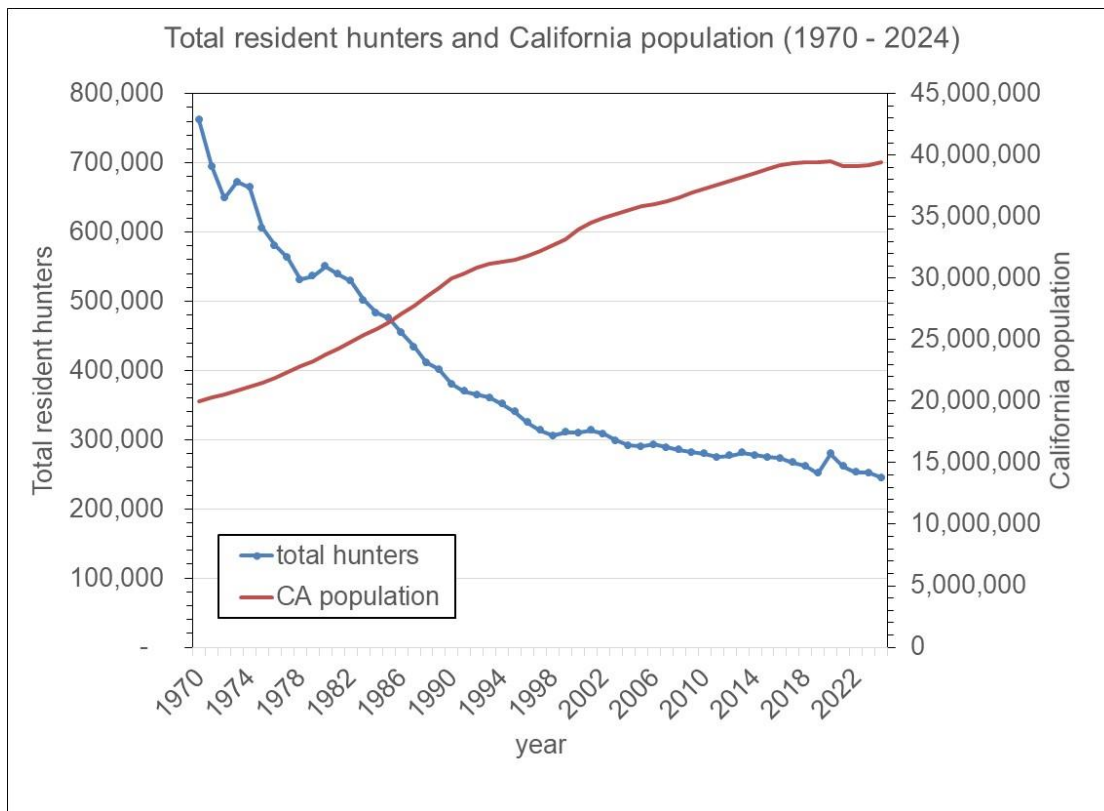
approximately \$52 per acre, or \$87 per participant per day¹. These are the values this bill proposes to re-set the maximum compensation limits to with indexing annually after 2026. The application fees for the SHARE program drawings, on the other hand, are indexed already and adjusted annually.

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, CDFW collected about \$540,000 in fees and spent about \$386,000 on the program in fiscal year 2023-2024. SHARE compensation paid to landowners was \$279,883.73 and \$320,120.03 in 2023 and 2024, respectively. The SHARE account balance as of June 30, 2024 is \$1.9 million.

Proponents argue that the increased compensation could help spread the SHARE program to more areas of the state. They also argue that CDFW does not pay compensation to any of the hunting organizations that help organize outdoor access programs. Existing law – and the law as proposed to be changed – does not require CDFW to compensate any nonprofit or other organizations if CDFW does not believe it is necessary.

Does SHARE help attract or retain hunters? Over the last 50 years, there has been a steady decline in annual hunting license sales (see figure below). There was a brief increase in 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but that was gone after a year or two and the downward trend has continued. This decline occurred at the same time as California's population approximately doubled. In 1970, almost 4% of the state's residents purchased a hunting license and now just about 0.6% do (2nd figure below). California is not unique in this regard, as hunting participation also declined nationally overall during this time period. Numerous factors are thought to be responsible for this decline in hunting participation including increased urbanization, loss of lands for hunting, loss of access to land for hunting, lack of quality hunts, and loss of hunting social groups, among others.

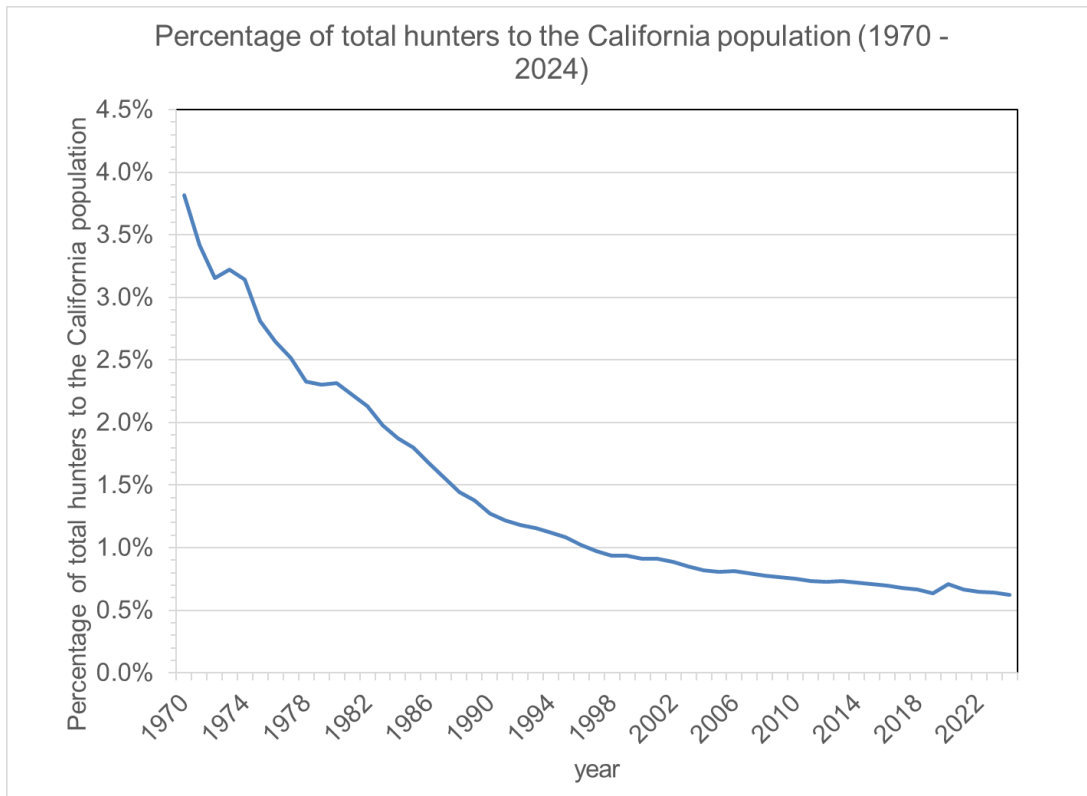
¹ The \$50 fee per participant per day was established in 2009, not 2003.



It may be that the increase in compensation for participation in the SHARE program will help to make more opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreational activities. This may help to increase interest in hunting and help to “recruit, retain, and reactivate” (“R3”) hunters. CDFW made a reasonably concerted effort several years ago on R3 in an effort to increase public interest in hunting and angling. While CDFW’s efforts were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic (which did temporarily increase license sales), the R3 effort does not seem to have made a discernable difference in hunting participation.

Outdoor access programs have been of particular legislative interest in recent years to help ensure that all Californians can participate in and benefit from the state’s outdoor recreational opportunities.

In view of the above, the Committee may wish to add a 5 year sunset to this bill in order to provide the opportunity to assess the impact of the changes proposed herein on the SHARE program and increased wildlife-dependent recreational activities through the program. In addition, a legislative report due in advance of the sunset will help in the evaluation of the SHARE program, particularly to the extent it helps to attract new hunter or returning hunters. [Amendment 1]



Related legislation

AB 1423 (Berryhill, Chapter 394, Statutes of 2009), allowed the SHARE program to be initiated without the Fish and Game Commission verifying sufficient public interest, expanded the properties that may be used for the SHARE program, and authorized an additional compensation option to landowners of \$50 per public participant per day.

AB 396 (Harman, Chapter 394, Statutes of 2003) established the SHARE program at CDFW.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT 1

Sunset the bill's provisions and revert to existing law on January 1, 2031.

Add a legislative report in a new section in the Fish and Game Code as follows:

157X. (a) On or before October 1, 2029, the director shall submit a written report to the Legislature that evaluates the effect of changes to the SHARE program, including the increase in maximum compensation limits.

(b) The report to be submitted pursuant to subdivision (a) shall include all of the following:

(1) Information regarding landowner participation and wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities in the SHARE program, including changes in landowner participation, acreage available, wildlife-dependent recreational activities, and counties with landowner participation.

(2) The ending balance, source and amount of all moneys deposited in, and all expenditures from the SHARE account, including for department overhead and administrative expenses.

(3) A summary of department outreach to nonprofit organizations and others regarding grants and other opportunities available through the SHARE program to promote participation in wildlife-dependent recreational activities.

(4) Information regarding the number of hunters or anglers, and the number of new or returning hunters or anglers participating in the SHARE program, including any evidence of any change in participation by those who had not previously purchased a hunting or fishing license due to participation in the SHARE program.

(5) Any other relevant information at the discretion of the director.

(c) The director shall collect all relevant, appropriate, and sufficient data necessary to evaluate the effect of changes in the SHARE program to landowner participation, and hunting and angling participation in the state. Data collection efforts pursuant to this subdivision shall avoid duplication and use data collected for other purposes, to the extent feasible.

(d) (1) The report to be submitted pursuant to subdivision (a) shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

(2) Pursuant to Section 10231.5 of the Government Code, this section is inoperative on October 1, 203X, and is repealed on January 1, 203X.

SUPPORT

California Waterfowl Association (sponsor)
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association
California Deer Association
California Houndsmen for Conservation
California Rice Commission
California Wild Sheep Foundation
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Grassland Water District
HOWL for Wildlife
National Wild Turkey Federation, California State Chapter
Northern California Water Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Sacramento Safari Club
Safari Club International – California Coalition
San Diego County Wildlife Federation
San Francisco Bay Safari Club
The Black Brant Group
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

OPPOSITION

None received