

THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1135
Author: Blakespear (D)
Amended: 3/23/26
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 5-1, 4/14/26
AYES: Becker, Allen, Cabaldon, Cortese, Stern
NOES: Seyarto
NO VOTE RECORDED: Grove

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-1, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NOES: Seyarto

SUBJECT: California Wildlife Coexistence Act

SOURCE: Defenders of Wildlife
National Wildlife Federation

DIGEST: This bill establishes the California Wildlife Coexistence Act, establishes state policy requiring an emphasis on the coexistence of humans and wildlife in the management of wildlife, and requires the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, upon appropriation, to establish a Wildlife Coexistence Program, the Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program, and the Wildlife Coexistence Technical Advisory Committee to perform certain duties to support coexistence, as provided, among other provisions.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the department in the California Natural Resources Agency. States that the department's mission "is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological value and for their use and enjoyment by the public," and provides

that its core programs include biodiversity conservation, enforcement, and hunting, fishing, and public use, among others. (Fish and Game Code (FGC) §712.1).

- 2) Authorizes the department to take for scientific, propagation, public health or safety, the prevention or relief of suffering, or law enforcement purposes, fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, birds, or any other plant or animal, as specified (FGC §1001).
- 3) Makes it unlawful to take a bird, mammal, fish, reptile, or amphibian except as provided in the Fish and Game Code or in a regulation adopted pursuant to the code, as provided (FGC §2000).
- 4) Requires the department in certain circumstances to issue permits to take particular animals due to depredation, as provided (FGC §§4150 et seq.).

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the California Wildlife Coexistence Act (act).
- 2) Establishes the state policy that the management of wildlife shall include an emphasis on the coexistence of humans and wildlife through department-led efforts to reduce, minimize, and mitigate conflicts. Require these efforts to also seek to align with the state's conservation and other goals, and to be accomplished through coordination and cooperation between the department and wildlife coexistence partners, as provided.
- 3) Requires the department, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to establish:
 - a) The Wildlife Coexistence Program (coexistence program) to manage and promote wildlife coexistence.
 - b) The Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program (renamed California Wolf-Livestock Compensation Pilot Program) (compensation program) to provide resources to eligible participants.
 - c) The Wildlife Coexistence Technical Advisory Committee (advisory committee) to provide technical guidance, public input and programmatic recommendations related to the department's wildlife coexistence efforts.
- 4) Requires the coexistence program to conduct activities such as managing, tracking, and responding to wildlife conflict calls, reports, and incident responses; and avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating conflicts between humans and wildlife proactively and continuously implementation best practices, among other provisions, as provided.

- 5) Requires the compensation program to provide resources to eligible participants for providing equipment and information on practices used to proactively and nonlethally deter wolf attacks on livestock (at least 50% of funds); compensation for confirmed or provable losses of livestock verified by the department to have been caused by wolves; and compensation for indirect impacts on livestock from the presence of wolves, among others.
- 6) Authorizes the department, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to provide resources to wildlife coexistence partners to support efforts required for the coexistence program and the compensation program including the costs of implementation.
- 7) Requires the advisory committee to advise the department on multiple topics, including best available science, and indigenous knowledge, among others.
- 8) Requires the advisory committee to consist of between 11 and 15 members, appointed by the department director, representing expertise or experience in one or more areas, such as wildlife biology or ecology, and animal behavior or veterinary science, among others, with no more than two people from each category.
- 9) Requires members of the advisory committee to serve three-year terms, authorize reappointments and that initial appointments may include shorter terms to ensure staggering of terms. Requires members of the advisory committee to serve without compensation, and to meet at least twice per year, as provided. Requires the department to consider, but not adopt, recommendations made by the advisory committee.
- 10) Defines “wildlife coexistence partners” to mean local, state, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, federally recognized tribes, non-federally recognized California Native American tribes included on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission, other entities, and academic programs.
- 11) Requires the department to include on a publicly accessible location on its internet website all of the following on or before July 1, 2028:
 - a) The annual number, general locations, and species involved in reported human-wildlife conflicts and department responses pursuant to the coexistence program.

- b) An inventory of known types of proactive wildlife coexistence activities within each region and statewide, including community-based and tribal efforts.
- c) Descriptions of resources provided pursuant to the compensation program, including recipients, regions, and dollar amounts.
- d) Depredation permits issued by species and regions.
- e) The outcomes of the compensation program including a list of any resources funded by activity, county, and wolf pack.

[NOTE: For additional background information on this bill, please see the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee's analysis]

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- CDFW estimates ongoing costs of about \$28.2 million in the first year and \$23.2 million annually thereafter (General Fund) for 83 positions to provide wildlife incident responses, subject matter expertise, technical assistance, development and use of innovate tools to reduce human-wildlife conflict, investigations and enforcement, issuance of grants, research, evaluation of measurable performance objectives, and otherwise implement the provisions of this bill.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/14/26)

Defenders of Wildlife (co-sponsor)
National Wildlife Federation (co-sponsor)
American River Conservancy
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute
Audubon California
California Association of Zoos and Aquariums
California Native Plant Society, Alta Bates Chapter
California State Association of Counties
California Wolf Foundation
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife
CleanEarth4Kids.org
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Center of San Diego

Environmental Protection Information Center
Friends of Rose Creek
Humane World for Animals
In Defense of Animals
Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust
Los Padres ForestWatch
Mountain Lion Foundation
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center
Office of Kat Taylor
Oswit Land Trust
Pacific Forest Trust
Project Coyote
Resource Renewal Institute
San Diego Humane Society/ Project Wildlife
Team Wolf
The Wildlife Crossing Fund
Urban Wildlife Research Project
Western Watersheds Project
Wholly H₂O
WildFutures
Wildlife Conservation Network
Women for Wolves

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/14/26)

California Cattlemen's Association
California Farm Bureau

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, "Californians are seeing more wildlife entering our communities in search of food, water and habitat. These encounters can threaten public safety, damage property and physically harm both people and wildlife. We know that proactive, non-lethal strategies, such as increasing public education and improving waste management, can prevent or temper these encounters. SB 1135 takes a practical, science-based approach by establishing a statewide Wildlife Coexistence Program that gives communities the tools they need to help prevent conflict before it happens. This bill will protect residents, support our agricultural communities and ensure California leads with smart, humane wildlife management."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: The California Farm Bureau, taking an “oppose unless amended” position, seeks changes to the makeup of the proposed Technical Advisory Committee to have increased rural representation, and multiple changes to the Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program, including the prioritization of direct loss compensation if funding is limited, improved wolf tracking and location information availability, and additional non-lethal (i.e. hazing) options for wolves.

They further write “SB 1135 offers a real change to codify critically needed guardrails and changes to wolf management in California.”

The California Cattlemen’s Association, also taking an “oppose unless amended” position, seeks similar changes focused on the Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program and an appropriate role for non-lethal deterrence measures, including the practicality of those requirements.

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**** **END** ****