

Date of Hearing: June 30, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

Diane Papan, Chair

SB 1135 (Blakespear) – As Amended June 3, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 29-2

SUBJECT: California Wildlife Coexistence Act

SUMMARY: Establishes the California Wildlife Coexistence Act. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the state policy that the management of wildlife shall include an emphasis on the coexistence of humans and wildlife through California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)-led efforts to reduce, minimize, and mitigate conflicts. Requires that these efforts also align with the state's conservation and other goals, and be accomplished through coordination and cooperation between CDFW and wildlife coexistence partners.
- 2) Requires CDFW, 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 from the Wolf-Livestock Compensation Pilot Program) (compensation program) to provide resources to eligible participants; and
 - c) The Wildlife Coexistence Technical Advisory Committee (advisory committee) to provide technical guidance, public input and programmatic recommendations related to CDFW's wildlife coexistence efforts.
- 3) Requires the coexistence program to conduct activities such as managing, tracking, and responding to wildlife conflict; avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating conflicts with effective and appropriate measures; investigate and analyze conflicts, maintain a conflict reporting tool, support community-based efforts and provide assistance and resources; and conduct public outreach and education.
- 4) Requires the compensation program to provide resources to eligible participants for providing equipment, information, and resources on practices used to proactively and nonlethally deter wolf attacks on livestock (scales the appropriation for this purpose based on the balance for the fund); compensation for confirmed or probable losses of livestock verified by CDFW to have been caused by wolves; and compensation for indirect impacts on livestock from the presence of wolves.
 - a) Requires a participant in the compensation program to have adopted, implemented, and documented, as practicable, proper and ongoing deployment of proactive nonlethal conflict reduction measures in a CDFW-defined area of wolf activity or pack territory in order to be eligible for compensation for livestock loss or indirect impacts.

Authorizes participants outside an area of wolf activity or pack territory to be eligible for compensation for two losses per 12-month period.

- b) Requires CDFW to consider all relevant factors in evaluating eligibility for compensation program participation.
- 5) Requires the advisory committee to provide technical guidance, programmatic analysis, scientific and Indigenous knowledge, public input, coordination, and programmatic suggestions for CDFW's coexistence efforts.
- a) Requires the advisory committee to consist of 11 to 15 members, appointed by the director of CDFW, representing expertise or experience in one or more areas (e.g., wildlife biology or ecology, agricultural interests, land management, urban communities) with no more than two members from each category.
 - b) Requires members of the advisory committee to serve three-year terms and to serve without compensation.
 - c) Requires the advisory committee to meet at least twice per year.
 - d) Requires CDFW to consider, but not adopt, recommendations made by the advisory committee.
- 6) Requires CDFW 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 CDFW 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; and
 - e) The outcomes of the compensation program including a list of any resources funded by activity, county, and wolf pack.
- 7) Authorizes CDFW, 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.
- 8) 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.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides CDFW jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species [Fish and Game Code (FGC) § 1802].
- 2) Declares that it is a policy of the state to encourage the preservation, conservation, and maintenance of wildlife resources under the jurisdiction and influence of the state (FGC § 1801). This policy should meet the following objectives:
 - a) To maintain sufficient populations of all species of wildlife and the habitat necessary to achieve the objectives stated in subdivisions (b), (c), and (d).
 - b) To provide for the beneficial use and enjoyment of wildlife by all citizens of the state.
 - c) To perpetuate all species of wildlife for their intrinsic and ecological values, as well as for their direct benefits to all persons.
 - d) To provide for aesthetic, educational, and nonappropriative uses of the various wildlife species.
 - e) To maintain diversified recreational uses of wildlife, including the sport of hunting, as proper uses of certain designated species of wildlife, subject to regulations consistent with the maintenance of healthy, viable wildlife resources, public safety, and a quality outdoor experience.
 - f) To provide for economic contributions to the citizens of the state, through the recognition that wildlife is a renewable resource of the land by which economic return can accrue to the citizens of the state, individually and collectively, through regulated management. Such management shall be consistent with the maintenance of healthy and thriving wildlife resources and the public ownership status of the wildlife resources.
 - g) To alleviate economic losses or public health or safety problems caused by wildlife to the people of the state either individually or collectively. Such resolution shall be in a manner designed to bring the problem within tolerable limits consistent with economic and public health considerations and the objectives stated in (a), (b) and (c).
- 3) Authorizes CDFW 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).
- 4) 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 (FGC § 2000).
- 5) Permits a landowner or tenant of property that is being damaged or destroyed or in danger of being damaged or destroyed by certain animals, to apply to CDFW for a permit to kill the animal, subject to certain limitations (FGC § 4181 and 14 California Code of Regulations § 401).

- 6) Allows CDFW to allocate federal funds and donations to pay for the Wolf-Livestock Compensation Pilot Program (FGC § 1501.6).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of this bill.** 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. [This bill] 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.”
- 2) **Background.** Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) is a growing concern and is most prevalent in regions where human activities have significantly altered the natural landscape. In California, one of the most ecologically diverse states in the U.S., this issue is amplified by a substantial human population, which has more than doubled since 1972. Human encroachment on wildlife habitats for purposes such as resource extraction, energy development, housing development, and recreation ultimately reduces habitat quality, increases sensory pollution, and creates resource competition. It is likely not coincidental that human animals come into the most conflict with other large predators, such as wolves, mountain lions, bears, and coyotes, due to competition over similar resources (e.g., land, water). As humans continue to expand their own range, the competition over finite resources will escalate. The conflict between humans and predators is a state- and species-wide phenomenon, with incidents ranging from black bears breaking into cabins in Lake Tahoe to mountain lions wandering into suburban backyards in Los Angeles. Now that gray wolves have returned to the state, ranchers are facing decades-old battles to protect cattle from the powerful pack hunters.

The methods for preventing and responding to HWC are simple to write but are more contentious to implement. As with most issues, proposed solutions range in cost, effectiveness, and controversy. With a collection of tools (e.g., conflict tracking, locking trash cans, hazing, constructing wildlife crossings), reducing and controlling HWC is possible. Yet, research consistently indicates that human tolerance is often the key factor influencing the persistence of HWC. Whether increasing acceptance for animals’ presence or decreasing tolerance of conflict actions, human behavior will likely be more difficult to change than animal behavior. Indeed, changing human attitudes can take decades, if they change at all. For example, beavers were eliminated from much of their range by the late 1800s due to unregulated trapping and habitat loss. The loss of beavers had serious repercussions on wetland and riparian ecosystem health, and efforts to return North America’s largest rodent to California was not without controversy because of potential damage the beavers could cause. Yet, in recent years, beaver restoration has been promoted across the state eventually leading to the establishment of CDFW’s Beaver Restoration Program and beavers have been further protected from lethal repercussions of nuisance

behavior. Additionally, CDFW awarded grant funding to the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center to design and launch the first-ever California Beaver Coexistence Training and Support Program, featuring the California Beaver Help Desk. Ideally, California can find a route to human-wildlife coexistence before realizing the environmental tragedy of destroying the state's native wildlife.

CDFW coexistence tools. CDFW manages several initiatives to inform HWC prevention and mitigation, including maintaining a Wildlife Incident Reporting (WIR) database as a tool for reporting HWC. WIR allows the public to submit a report that is assigned for review by a CDFW staff member. The public can use WIR for any wildlife species in California. These reports can range from a simple observation to verifiable conflict behavior. The reports that require a response (sick/injured wildlife or animal causing property damage) are assigned to a CDFW wildlife biologist or wildlife officer for investigation.

CDFW maintains the Wildlife Health Laboratory to investigate, monitor, and manage wildlife population health issues in California. This includes activities like disease surveillance, genetics research, wildlife rehabilitation, and HWC. The Wildlife Health Laboratory staff help coordinate helicopter captures to mark, radio-collar, and disease test key species. Animal health, distribution, and abundance are critical factors in understanding HWC and identifying potential conflict zones. Most recently, CDFW has deployed helicopters to capture deer, elk, and wolves. CDFW also maintains a Wildlife Forensic Laboratory, which is responsible for performing genetic analyses on wildlife samples collected from public safety wildlife incidences to help identify the specific animal involved.

State HWC efforts are governed by law, regulation, and California's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). SWAP is intended to be a blueprint for preserving the state's wildlife by examining the health of wildlife and prescribing actions for conservation while addressing the needs of a growing human population. Every ten years CDFW, with input from subject matter experts and stakeholders, updates SWAP; the most recent iteration was finalized in 2025.

Until recently, CDFW maintained an HWC program. The program was staffed using one-time funds (\$5 million) from a 2022-23 Drought Resilience and Response Budget Change Proposal to respond to increases in HWC due to the drought. The program functioned as "first responder" for helping communities develop tools and providing state-wide support for HWC management. Most of the positions for the HWC program were limited term and, under budget constraints, were lost in 2024—further straining CDFW. The previous year, CDFW received \$7 million for HWC response equipment such as fence flagging to protect livestock from wolves and wildlife traps.

Finally, individuals may apply for depredation permits from CDFW, which allow a property owner or tenant to take an elk, bear, bobcat, beaver, wild pigs, deer, wild turkeys, or gray squirrels that are damaging or destroying, or immediately threatening to damage or destroy, land or property. Upon satisfactory evidence of the damage or destruction, actual or immediately threatened, CDFW issues a time-sensitive, revocable permit for the taking of that animal. Depredation permits are generated and issued through the WIR system after agency staff determine that the legal and biological criteria have been met. Not all wildlife

conflicts result in a depredation permit, and even when a permit is issued, it does not always result in the taking of an animal. The state prioritizes nonlethal conflict-prevention tools and permits to lethally remove an animal are generally considered only after multiple attempts at nonlethal management have been unsuccessful.

Compensation program. Once extirpated from California, gray wolves have returned to California and are estimated to be 50–70 in number. Livestock depredation has been a central source of conflict as wolves recolonize rural areas. Over the past decade, California has investigated 274 reported wolf-livestock incidents, of which 128 were confirmed as wolf depredation. To address rancher concerns, the state has implemented a variety of conflict-mitigation and compensation efforts. In 2021, CDFW launched a three-pronged pilot program that reimbursed ranchers for livestock killed by wolves, compensated them for indirect losses such as reduced pregnancy rates and weight loss in herds, and paid for nonlethal deterrents like fencing, range riders, and alarm systems. CDFW currently compensates only for confirmed direct livestock losses due to the high demand for compensation. The wolf compensation program has been funded as follows: \$3 million in FY2021–22, \$0.6 million in FY2024–25, and \$2 million in FY2025–26. In May 2025, Shasta County joined several other Northern California counties in declaring local states of emergency related to wolf impacts on ranching communities. More recently, in June 2025, CDFW launched a new pilot program focused on reducing wolf-livestock conflict in Siskiyou County and the Sierra Valley—areas with relatively high depredation rates.

- 3) **Arguments in support.** A coalition of supporters write in support of this bill to “reinstate and expand the state’s successful [HWC] program.” They note that proactive coexistence strategies are more important and more needed than ever considering the 31% increase in HWC reports and a 58% increase in field contacts over the last five years, without CDFW staffing to meet the need. They note that the compensation program will ensure “that impacted communities will receive important non-lethal deterrence and financial support as wolves continue their successful return to California.” Further, they note that the coexistence program will restore crucial specialists “to serve as trusted messengers to de-escalate community concerns, provide accurate behavior-based information, and guide landowners through practical solutions such as secure enclosures, attractant management, or non-lethal mitigation tools.” Finally, they note the value of having all these resources under one program, which will provide a centralized location for resources and lower the cost for the public and the state.
- 4) **Arguments in opposition.** The California Rifle and Pistol Association (CRPA) writes in opposition to this bill because they believe the prioritization of non-lethal approaches neglects traditional approaches like hunting and would delay species removal, which would put property and the public at risk. Further CRPA contends that the creation of the wildlife coexistence program will divert CDFW resources from other underfunded wildlife programs in CDFW.
- 5) **Related legislation.** SB 1305 (Richardson) of the current legislative session would require CDFW to develop a roadmap for the possible reintroduction of the grizzly bear into the state based upon specified considerations, among other provisions. SB 1305 is set for hearing in this Committee.

SB 1397 (Alvarado-Gil) of the current legislative session would require CDFW to maintain, enhance, and expand its human-mountain lion conflicts program in order to protect public health and safety, among other provisions. SB 1397 is set for hearing in this Committee.

AB 1024 (Harabedian) of 2025 would have required CDFW to develop a regional plan to address issues related to bears and would have required CDFW to tag and track any bear that entered a residential neighborhood in the San Gabriel Valley. AB 1024 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1038 (Hadwick) of 2025 would have required the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) to establish a pursue season during which a person could allow dogs to pursue a bear and authorizes the Commission to establish a bear hunting season during which a person may allow dogs to pursue a bear. AB 1038 was held in this Committee.

SB 818 (Alvarado-Gil) of 2025 would have authorized a pilot program in El Dorado County to allow a mountain lion pursuit season with dogs; however, this version of AB 818 failed passage in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee. SB 818 was subsequently amended to increase CDFW assistance in El Dorado County to reduce mountain lion-human conflict. SB 818 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2196 (Connolly), Chapter 705, Statutes of 2024, codifies the beaver restoration program at CDFW.

ACR 145 (Patterson), Chapter 32, Resolutions of 2024, declared 2024 as the year to Coexist with Wildlife, California.

AB 2344 (Friedman), Chapter 964, Statutes of 2022, requires the California Department of Transportation, in consultation with CDFW, to take actions to address wildlife connectivity needs related to the state highway system such as identify areas with high collision rates and implement projects to improve connectivity.

SB 170 (Skinner), Chapter 240, Statutes of 2021, appropriated \$3 million for a wolf conflict compensation program to allocate funds to pay for the deterrence of wolf presence near livestock, the impacts of wolf presence on livestock, and for verified loss of livestock for participating ranchers.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Defenders of Wildlife (co-sponsor)
National Wildlife Federation (co-sponsor)
American River Conservancy
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute
Audobon California
Audubon California
Brooke Laine, El Dorado County Supervisor, District 5

California Association of Zoos & Aquariums
California Native Plant Society
California Native Plant Society, Alta Peak Chapter
California State Association of Counties
California Wolf Foundation
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife
Cleaneearth4kids.org
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Center of San Diego
Environmental Information Protection Center
Friends of Rose Creek
Humane World for Animals
In Defense of Animals
Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust
Los Padres Forestwatch
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Mountain Lion Foundation
National Parks Conservation Association
NRDC
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center
Oswit Land Trust
Pacific Forest Trust
Project Coyote
Resource Renewal Institute
San Diego Humane Society - Project Wildlife
San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance
Sierra Consortium
Social Compassion in Legislation
The Nature Conservancy
The Office of Kat Taylor
The Wildlife Crossing Fund
Western Watersheds Project
Wholly H2O
Wildfutures
Wildlife Conservation Network
Women for Wolves

Opposition

California Rifle and Pistol Association, INC.

Analysis Prepared by: Stephanie Mitchell / W., P., & W. / (916) 319-2096