

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

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

Policy Committee: Water, Parks and Wildlife

Vote: 8 - 2

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to establish the Wildlife Coexistence Program, the Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program, and the Wildlife Coexistence Technical Advisory Committee.

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Declares it is the policy of the state that the management of wildlife shall include an emphasis on the coexistence of humans and wildlife through CDFW-led efforts to reduce, minimize, and mitigate conflicts, as specified.
- 2) Requires CDFW, upon appropriation, to establish the Wildlife Coexistence Program to manage and promote wildlife coexistence by conducting numerous specified activities.
- 3) Authorizes CDFW, upon appropriation, including the cost for implementation, to provide resources to wildlife coexistence partners to support efforts required for the Wildlife Coexistence Program and the Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program.
- 4) Renames the California Wolf-Livestock Compensation Pilot Program established pursuant to the Budget Act of 2021 the Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program and requires CDFW, upon appropriation, including the cost for implementation, to establish the Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program to provide resources to eligible participants for various specified purposes.
- 5) Requires CDFW, upon appropriation, to establish the Wildlife Coexistence Technical Advisory Committee to provide technical guidance, public input, and programmatic recommendations related to the department's wildlife coexistence efforts; specifies the topics the advisory committee must advise CDFW on as well as requirements related to committee membership, term limits, and meeting frequency; provides that members of the advisory committee shall serve without compensation; and requires CDFW to consider the advisory committee's recommendations.
- 6) Requires CDFW to post specified information on its website by July 1, 2028.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

CDFW estimates costs of approximately \$28.1 million in fiscal year (FY) 2027-28 and \$23.2 million in FY 2028-29 and ongoing for 83 permanent positions (environmental scientists and

specialists, fish and wildlife technicians, supervising laboratory assistants, veterinarians, fish and game wardens, fish and game lieutenant supervisors, warden pilots, research scientists, attorneys, information officers, interpreters, information technology supervisors, various analysts, and personnel specialists), 14 limited-term fish and wildlife scientific aid positions, 46 vehicles, and equipment (such as live traps, animal transport crates, wildlife health and disease surveillance supplies, and diagnostic testing).

Tasks include, among other things, conducting wildlife incident responses; developing and providing subject matter expertise, technical assistance, and consultation; developing and using tools to reduce human–wildlife conflict; and conducting investigations, enforcement actions, public education, outreach, research, data management, health and disease surveillance, genetic and forensic interpretation of samples, validation of scientifically defensible results, and evaluation of measurable performance objectives.

CDFW notes its estimate does not include additional costs associated with providing eligible participants (through the California Wolf-Livestock Compensation Pilot Program) with equipment and information on practices used to proactively and nonlethally deter wolf attacks on livestock, 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. The committee notes CDFW’s existing Wolf-Livestock Compensation Pilot Program – which this bill codifies – received \$3 million in FY 2021-22, \$600,00 in FY 2024-25, and \$2 million in FY 2025-26.

CDFW further notes its current wildlife health lab facility is over 50 years old, lacks adequate space to perform the lab’s functions, and limits the department’s capacity to provide wildlife care. Utilizing one-time funding provided in FY 2022-23, CDFW has started evaluating existing and ongoing needs. However, the department has not yet finalized the costs associated with upgrading or establishing an appropriate wildlife care facility – which may be necessary should this bill go into effect.

Until recently, the department maintained a human-wildlife conflict program, which helped communities develop tools and provided statewide support for human-wildlife conflict management. The program received one-time funding in the 2021 budget; however, most of the limited-term positions created for the program were eliminated in 2024. The author of this bill, along with dozens of organizations, have submitted a request for \$48.8 million in FY 2026-27 to establish and sustain a Wildlife Coexistence Program and fund a comprehensive Wolf-Livestock Coexistence and Compensation Program at CDFW. However, the FY 2026-27 budget includes only \$1 million in one-time funding (Fish and Game Preservation Fund) to allow CDFW to use existing Environmental License Plate Fund moneys to fund temporary resources to support its Coexisting with Wildlife Initiative, which the department argues will allow for proactive mitigation of human-wildlife conflict and foster safe coexistence with native wildlife in California.

CDFW has experienced longstanding budget challenges despite repeated efforts over many years to address them. The department’s service-based budgeting (SBB) analysis for FY 2023-24 indicates the department (including its species and habitat conservation program, where most of the tasks associated with human-wildlife coexistence are likely to be located) is funded for only one-third of its mandated program work. The SBB effort highlights the degree to which CDFW

operates with significant gaps between what is required to achieve its mandated mission and the level at which it is currently funded.

## COMMENTS:

### 1) **Purpose.** 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 can occur when humans encounter or interact with wild animals in an unwanted or unsafe way. In California, habitat loss and a changing climate have increased the frequency and type of human-wildlife conflicts reported to CDFW. It has become more common for people to be "living with wildlife" as communities grow along the urban-wildland interface and wildlife look for limited resources such as food, water, and habitat. CDFW serves a unique role as the lead state agency addressing public safety wildlife issues in California and helping to proactively address human-wildlife interactions that may escalate to perceived or actual human-wildlife conflict, including depredation events (like wildlife damage to agriculture, livestock, infrastructure, or private property) and potential or imminent threats to human health and safety. For a detailed discussion of CDFW's coexistence tools and efforts to date – including its interim and limited-term human-wildlife conflict and wolf management and compensation programs – please see the Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee's analysis of this bill.

Writing in support, a large coalition of organizations argues this bill reinstates and expands the state's successful human-wildlife conflict program to respond to wildlife conflicts by tracking incidents and handling calls; prevent and reduce conflicts using nonlethal, science-based, and indigenous-informed strategies; investigate and analyze incidents, including depredation and wildlife health issues; maintain a statewide reporting system for wildlife incidents; support community efforts with technical assistance and resources; and conduct public outreach and education. The coalition also supports the codification of CDFW's wolf management program, ensuring impacted communities receive non-lethal deterrence and financial support as wolves continue their successful return to California.

Among others in opposition, the Shasta County Board of Supervisors states that while the goals of the bill are well-intentioned, "the bill creates substantial statewide responsibilities and makes them entirely dependent on future funding." The county argues that many rural counties are already experiencing growing wildlife-related challenges, particularly involving wolves and other large predators, and "this bill offers no guaranteed or sustainable funding to meet the requirements it imposes or the increased expectations of reporting and coordination."

- 3) **Related Legislation.** SB 1305 (Richardson) of the current legislative session requires CDFW to develop a roadmap for the possible reintroduction of the grizzly bear into the state. SB 1305 is pending in this committee.

SB 1397 (Alvarado-Gil) of the current legislative session requires CDFW to maintain, enhance, and expand its human-mountain lion conflicts program. SB 1397 is pending in this committee.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Nikita Koraddi / APPR. / (916) 319-2081