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Napa

Peter S. Silva, Member
Jamul

Samantha Murray, Member
Del Mar

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Gavin Newsom, Governor

Fish and Game Commission



Wildlife Heritage and Conservation
Since 1870

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California Sea Grant State Fellowship Program

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Position Description

The California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) was the first wildlife conservation agency in the United States, pre-dating even the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries. The Commission has hundreds of authorities, some general in nature and some very specific through statutes of the Fish and Game Code, Public Resources Code, and Government Code.

In general, the Commission has jurisdiction over nearly every living thing in California except people, agriculture, and domestic animals. Specifically, the Commission is formally vested with authority to regulate the take, possession and conservation of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles on all lands of the State and all waters, including ocean waters to three miles out into the Pacific Ocean. The Commission also addresses fish, wildlife and conservation issues on a broad scale, through such subjects as climate change, marine plastics pollution, sustainable fishing communities, predator management, tribal nation engagement, marine aquaculture best management practices, fisheries bycatch, and marine protected areas.

The California State Legislature has deemed that the scope and responsibilities of the Commission have significantly expanded over the years as the size and diversity of California's population has increased, and as the scientific knowledge of the habitat conservation and ecosystem-based management needs of fish and wildlife has

expanded. The Governor-appointed Commissioners are expected to make complex public policy and biological decisions on behalf of the people of California, with a small staff that works to ensure the Commissioners have the necessary information for making those decisions. Examples of the Commission's statutory authorities include:

- formulating general policies for the conduct of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department);
- determining when, where and by what methods hunters and fisherman may take animals and fish;
- listing and delisting of native plants, animals, and fish as threatened or endangered species under the California Endangered Species Act;
- establishing and regulating uses of protected lands and waters such as wildlife areas, ecological reserves and marine protected areas;
- regulating the possession and care of restricted species, such as eagles, owls, bobcats, and bears; and
- addressing non-native species importation, possession and sale;
- leasing state water bottoms and kelp beds for the purposes of aquaculture and commercial kelp harvest.

The Commission conducts its business at six meetings per year, which are strategically located throughout the State to encourage public outreach and participation. In addition, the Commission currently has three committees that each have three meetings per year: The Marine Resources Committee, Wildlife Resources Committee, and Tribal Committee. Each committee is chaired or co-chaired by no more than two Commissioners. The goal of these committees is to allow for greater in-depth presentations and discussions on fish and wildlife issues and regulatory proposals under development, and to provide recommendations to the Commission for possible action on these topics. The committee meetings are less formal in nature than Commission meetings and provide for additional stakeholder access to the Commissioners.

There is sometimes confusion about the distinction between the Commission and the Department. In the most basic terms, the Commission establishes policies and regulations while the Department is guided by the Commission's policies, is charged with implementing and enforcing regulations set by the Commission and conducting the day to day management of programs established through regulation, and provides biological data and expertise to inform the Commission's decision-making process.

Potential Roles and Projects for 2020 Sea Grant Fellow

The California Sea Grant fellow will have the opportunity to serve as staff on a wide variety of issues before the Commission, including many of those listed above, depending on the fellow's areas of interest, educational goals, initiative, communication and analytical skills, and professional goals. The types of functions the fellow might

support include:

- assisting the executive director in developing policies and/or strategic approaches to items that may be controversial in nature;
- working on committee agendas and topics directly with the Commission's marine advisor and wildlife advisor;
- organizing and/or leading related meetings and workshops;
- enhancing transparency by outreach and communication with stakeholders and partners, and working to maintain broad project or program support;
- drafting and reviewing staff summaries for Commission and committee meetings;
- helping improve the Commission website and develop social media outreach.

While project priorities may change over time to address Commission direction and regulatory need, FGC staff are currently considering the following projects for the 2020 Sea Grant fellow:

- Coastal Fishing Communities Project
- Aquaculture Best Management Practices Plans
- Invasive Species Management Strategies

In addition to these FGC special projects, the Sea Grant fellow may be involved in ongoing collaborative projects to address the management of California's resources in various focal areas including climate change, stakeholder input, tribal concerns, and new and emerging regulatory issues.

Placement with the Commission will help the fellow better understand how fish and wildlife statutes, regulations and policies are established and implemented in California, and will also provide a front seat to political, administrative, and stakeholder participation processes including direct interaction with Governor-appointed decision makers.