

ADDENDUM
to the 2019 SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT
TO THE
2010 FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT
REGARDING ELK HUNTING

prepared by the

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

on behalf of

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

as

LEAD AGENCY UNDER THE

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

for the

REGULARLY NOTICED RULEMAKING ACTION TO AMEND

SECTIONS 364 ELK, 364.1 SHARE ELK, and 555 COOPERATIVE ELK HUNTS, AND
ADDING SUBSECTION 555.1 CONFLICT ZONE COOPERATIVE ELK HUNTS

TITLE 14, CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS

2024 HUNTING SEASON

(OAL Notice File No. **2024-0123-07**)

INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has prepared this addendum pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., to inform consideration by the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) of proposed amendments to existing regulations governing elk hunting in California (California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Section Sections 364, 364.1., 555, 555.1). F&G Code Section 3950 designates elk as a game mammal in California. F&G Code Sections 203 and 332, authorize the Commission to fix the area or areas, seasons and hours, bag and possession limit, sex, and total number of elk that may be taken pursuant to its regulations. F&G Code Section 203.1 requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, the welfare of individual animals, and other pertinent facts when establishing hunting regulations for elk. The Commission establishes elk hunting tag quotas through regulations amended annually, as needed, based on current population estimates derived from annual surveys by CDFW.

The Commission serves as the CEQA lead agency when it promulgates and amends the elk hunting regulations. (Public Resources Code, Section 21067; CEQA Guidelines Section 15367.)¹ The Commission established maximum tag quotas for all elk hunting zones in California in 2010 with, among other things, the certification of a Final Environmental Document under CEQA (2010 Elk ED) (SCH No. 200912083). The Commission amended the existing regulations in 2019 by, among other things, certifying a Final Supplemental Environmental Document under CEQA (2019 Elk SED) (SCH No. 2018112037). The 2010 Elk ED and the 2019 Elk SED provide relevant and important informational value as the Commission as CEQA lead agency considers proposed amendments to the existing regulations for the 2024 elk hunting season in California. This addendum documents the Commission's consideration of related environmental effects.

EARLIER PROJECT APPROVAL

CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with the Commission's certified regulatory program approved by the Secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.5 (See generally Title 14, CCR Sections 781.5 and 15251(b)). CEQA requires all public agencies in the State to evaluate the environmental impacts of discretionary projects they propose to carry out or approve, including promulgating regulations, which may have a potential to significantly affect the environment.

¹ The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

In 2010, the Commission certified a Final Environmental Document Regarding Elk Hunting (2010 Elk ED) (SCH No. 200912083) as the lead agency under CEQA as part of the Commission's review and adoption of the Elk Hunting regulations.

In 2019 the Commission amended the Elk Hunting regulations and certified a Final Supplemental Environmental Document Regarding Elk Hunting (2019 Elk SED) (SCH No. 2018112037) which focused on the potential for any new significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts from an increase in the tag quota range in the Northwestern Elk Zone (NW Zone). The Commission considered the proposed project increase of 20 tags and three alternatives. The Commission as lead agency certified the SED and determined adoption of the amended regulations as proposed would not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously identified by the Commission in 2010. The Commission approved the increase of 20 tags for the 2019-20 elk hunting regulations. In 2023, the Commission amended the Elk Hunting tag quotas in the Siskiyou and Northwestern Hunt Zones, adding 10 and 22 tags, respectively; modified the boundaries of the Bear Valley, Cache Creek, and La Panza Hunt Zone; and created the Gabilan, Central Coast, and Tehachapi Hunt Zones, adding 70 elk tags across these new zones. The Commission approved the tag allocations, boundary modifications, and new Hunt Zones for the 2023-24 elk hunting regulations.

PROPOSED 2024 TAG ALLOCATIONS FOR THE GRIZZLY ISLAND HUNT ZONE

The elk tag quotas described in the 2010 Elk ED are the basis for the number of tags currently allocated to all zones in regulation. Amendments of tag quotas for the 2024 elk hunting season by the Commission are based on survey data collected by the Department in its annual survey efforts. The survey was completed in March of 2024. For 2024, the proposed tag allocation for the Grizzly Island Zone Periods 10, 12, and 13 bull hunts is 4, 4, and 3, respectively. Currently, the public tag quota (general draw) for the Grizzly Island Zone Periods 10, 12, and 13 bull hunts is 3, 3, and 0, respectively.

The 2010 Elk ED found no significant impacts for a range of bull elk tags for the Grizzly Island Zone from 0-36 across 13 hunt periods. Therefore, there are no new significant or substantially more severe impacts from amending the elk hunt regulations to increase the bull tags in the Grizzly Island Zone Periods 10, 12, and 13 by 1, 1, and 3 tags, respectively.

PROPOSED 2024 SHARE TAG ALLOCATIONS FOR THE SISKIYOU, NORTHWESTERN, TEHACHAPI, AND MENDOCINO HUNT ZONES

The 2024 Proposed Regulations includes adding 18 bull and 18 antlerless SHARE tags to the Siskiyou Hunt Zone, adding 6 bull and 26 antlerless SHARE tags to the Northwestern Hunt Zone, adding 20 bull and 15 antlerless SHARE tags to the Tehachapi Hunt Zone, and adding 18 bull and 26 antlerless SHARE tags to the Mendocino Hunt Zone.

To maintain sustainable populations of elk and meet natural resources management goals, the Commission establishes and closes hunt zones, allocates tags, and sets hunting season dates. SHARE hunts in all four zones are designed to keep elk abundance at a sustainable level based on the environmental, biological, and social conditions of the elk. Therefore, amending the elk hunt regulations to add SHARE tags will not cause any new significant or substantially severe impacts than previously considered by the Commission.

PROPOSED 2024 COOPERATIVE ELK HUNT TAG ALLOCATIONS FOR THE SISKIYOU, NORTHWESTERN, TEHACHAPI, AND MENDOCINO HUNT ZONES

The 2024 Proposed Regulations includes modifying the mechanism by which Cooperative Elk Hunt (“Landowner”) antlerless tags are distributed in the Siskiyou Hunt Zone, Northwestern Hunt Zone, Tehachapi Hunt Zone, and the Mendocino Hunt Zone. Specifically, Landowner antlerless tags will be distributed at a 1:1 ratio relative to the sum of the annual general + SHARE antlerless tags allocated.

To maintain sustainable populations of elk and meet natural resources management goals, the Commission establishes and closes hunt zones, allocates tags, and sets hunting season dates. Cooperative Landowner hunts in these four zones are designed to keep elk abundance at a sustainable level based on the environmental, biological, and social conditions of the elk. Therefore, amending the elk hunt regulations to modify Landowner antlerless tag distribution will not cause any new significant or substantially severe impacts than previously considered by the Commission.

NO SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT IS REQUIRED

In general, CEQA applies whenever a public agency proposes to carry out or approve a discretionary project. (Public Resources Code, Section 21080(a)). CEQA provides that, where a public agency proposes to modify a previously approved project for which a Final Environmental Document was prepared and certified:

“The lead agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an **addendum** to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.” (Title 14, CCR Section 15164)

- A Subsequent Environment Document (Section 15162) when there is substantial evidence that:
 - Substantial changes are proposed in the project, which will require major revisions to the previous environmental impact report (EIR) or environmental document (ED).
 - Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken, which will require major revisions to the previous EIR or environmental documentation.
 - New information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time the previous EIR or ED was certified as complete, becomes available.
- A Supplement to an Environment Document (Section 15163) when:
 - A subsequent ED is not required.
 - Only minor changes to the project are described.
 - Only that information to make the ED adequate is provided.
- An Addendum to the Certified ED (Section 15164) is proper when:
 - The changes or additions presented in this project are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent ED have occurred.
 - The Commission may properly prepare and may rely on an addendum in accordance with Section 15164 to fulfill its obligations under CEQA.

NO ADDITIONAL IMPACTS UNDER CEQA

The Commission has determined that amending the current elk hunting regulations based on annual survey results will not result in any new or significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2010 Elk ED and 2019 Elk SED for this project.

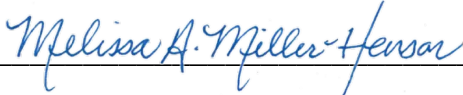
This project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. There are no impacts to the habitat of fish and wildlife species.

This approval action adjusts the previous year tag quotas based on more current population information, modifies existing hunt zone boundaries, and establishes three

new hunt zones. No other aspect of the project is changed. No new significant or substantially more severe impacts under CEQA will occur due to this change.

AMENDMENT OF THE ELK HUNT REGULATIONS

In conclusion, the Commission finds that amending the elk hunt regulations in Title 14, CCR Section 364, Section 364.1, Section 555, and Section 555.1, will not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2010 Elk ED and the 2019 Elk SED. The Commission also finds that subsequent or supplemental review beyond this Addendum is not warranted pursuant to Title 14, CCR Section 15164, in connection with this proposed action.



Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
California Fish and Game Commission

April 12, 2024

Date