



COUNTY OF SISKIYOU

Board of Supervisors

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February 3, 2026

Via Electronic Mail Only

Brian Leo
Statewide Deer Coordinator
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
BigGame@wildlife.ca.gov

Subject: Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors Input on the Deer Conservation and Management Plan

Dear Mr. Leo,

The Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors submits the following comments for consideration during the statewide Deer Conservation and Management Plan creation process and the future development of updated Deer Conservation Unit (DCU) plans. These comments are based on the outline CDFW staff presented at a local Fish and Game Commission meeting and reflect both input from the Siskiyou County Fish and Game Commission and the Board's perspective on local management priorities.

Comments on Stated Objectives in CDFW's Plan Outline

The stated objective to "maintain a viable population" would benefit from additional clarity about the role of deer within California's ecosystems and communities. Framing the population goal solely as "viable" provides limited guidance for management compared with other species plans. For example, the Black Bear Conservation and Management Plan include an objective to conserve and manage black bear populations that are ecologically functional, disease resilient, and genetically diverse statewide and regionally. Expanding the deer objective in a similar manner would better reflect the multiple ecological and community roles deer play and provide a clearer foundation for DCU-level population planning and management.

Jess Harris
District 1

Ed Valenzuela
District 2

Michael N. Kobseff
District 3

Nancy Ogren
District 4

Ray Haupt
District 5

With population objectives framed, the Plan should also address how habitat conditions will be managed to support those objectives. The stated objective to “conserve habitats to support the long-term viability of deer populations” should be clarified to reflect the reality that CDFW manages very little land. In Siskiyou County, the state owns only a small fraction of the land base, making effective habitat conservation dependent on coordinated partnerships with federal agencies, private landowners and tribes. For example, much of the winter range in Siskiyou County has not seen fire in decades, resulting in dense, low-nutrient brush and reduced water availability in areas critical for deer, such as Hayden Ridge in Scott Valley. Addressing these conditions through collaboration with private landowners and CAL Fire, including the use of prescribed fire, is essential to maintain forage quality and water availability, supporting reproductive success and overall population health. Explicitly recognizing these partnerships would make habitat-related goals achievable and actionable.

In addition, we recommend explicitly including “enhancing hunting opportunities” as a stated objective. This would align the Plan with the legal designation of deer as a game species and acknowledge the important role regulated hunting plays in rural communities.

Comments on Adaptive Management

We support using an adaptive management framework to guide deer conservation and recommend that CDFW provide clear, actionable steps within DCU plans based on population data and key habitat information. Important habitat information to consider includes fire history, water availability, vegetation condition, and landscape connectivity, such as migration corridors and habitat barriers. Additionally, mortality factors such as vehicle collisions significantly affect deer populations and should be incorporated into monitoring efforts. Targeted management actions, such as coordination with Caltrans in key migration areas and a united statewide roadkill reporting effort, would improve data collection and help reduce preventable losses.

Predation is also a key driver of deer population dynamics and should be explicitly considered within adaptive management and monitoring frameworks. Bears and coyotes contribute substantially to fawn mortality, and as wolf populations increase in the state, additional demand on deer populations should be evaluated alongside existing predator pressures.

To translate the monitoring and habitat information described above into actionable decisions, clear population targets and criteria for interventions should be established. We recommend that CDFW set minimum population targets for deer and include a plan to achieve and maintain them. Population goals provide a consistent foundation for management decisions, including actions such as hunting tag allocations. These targets should be incorporated into DCU-level objectives, with criteria specifying when and how

interventions, such as habitat treatments, would be implemented. The Plan should define the level of population change that can be reliably detected through monitoring and specify how often that information will be reviewed. It should also outline realistic management responses within CDFW's authority and include timelines for periodic review and updates to ensure responsiveness to changing conditions. Incorporating these elements will allow CDFW to move from general objectives to clearly defined, data-informed decisions at the DCU level.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input during the Plan's development; we look forward to reviewing the draft later this year.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Sincerely,

Ray Haupt, Chair
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

CC: Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors
Rural County Representatives of California
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange
Senator Megan Dahle
Assemblymember Heather Hadwick
Michael Harris, California Department of Fish & Wildlife
Mike Ford, Siskiyou Fish and Game Commission