

## **Sonoma County Fish and Wildlife Commission Guidelines Regarding Fund Balance and Grant Funding**

The California Fish and Game Code Section 13100 establishes the county fish and wildlife propagation fund to be expended for the protection, conservation, propagation, and preservation of fish and wildlife, under the direction of the board of supervisors (BOS), pursuant to the Fish and Game Code. Funds are received through various fines. The BOS established the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to advise and make recommendations to the BOS and the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer (Agricultural Commissioner) on the expenditure of funds that benefit fish and wildlife in Sonoma County.<sup>1</sup> As the grant funds provided under this Code constitute public funds, the Commission has produced these guidelines to provide information to the public related to how the Commission maintains and distributes these funds. Any deviation from these guidelines must be approved by the Commission and the Agricultural Commissioner.

### **Reserve Fund**

The Commission has a \$100,000 reserve fund to protect the integrity and sustainability of the Fish and Wildlife Commission's activity. Any changes to the reserve minimum will be recommended by the Agricultural Commissioner, based on the San Francisco Consumer Price Index, in consultation with the Commission, at the time the Commission's budget is established.

Reserve funds may be used under exceptional circumstances, specifically for projects the Commission believes will have a considerable and lasting effect on the protection, conservation, propagation, and preservation of fish and wildlife, which are time sensitive in nature. The Commission shall present its recommendation for funding to the Agricultural Commissioner, who will prepare a funding request for the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors' approval.

If reserve funds are used, bringing the balance below the established minimum, the reserve fund shall be restored to its minimum level within five years in annual installments from the Commission's budget.

### **Annual Budget**

The fiscal year budget will be prepared in November, or when possible, via the Fish and Wildlife Commission's budget ad hoc committee and Agricultural Commissioner. The budget will be established using a five-year average of revenues as a guide. The Agricultural Commissioner will ensure any significant unanticipated revenues received mid-year are made available to the Commission via a budgetary adjustment or rolled forward to the next fiscal year, as practicable.

### **Criteria for Grant Evaluation**

In total, the Fish and Game Code establishes seven main categories for grant making, with several miscellaneous allowable areas. The Commission will decide which grants to fund based on the merits of each project, as indicated in the grant application. In particular, the Commission will assess:

- Significance and lasting effect on the protection of fish and wildlife,

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission also administers the Abalone Preservation Fund, which was established by the courts and is to be used solely for projects or equipment that affects the abalone population on the Sonoma Coast.

- Conservation,
- Propagation and preservation of fish and wildlife,
- Time sensitivity, and
- Education

In addition, the Commission has established three categories of grant areas to help evaluate applications and express relative priorities when evaluating grant proposals, as shown below. The practice of the Commission is to discourage the inclusion of administration and/or labor costs. The Commission retains the right of ownership of any equipment purchased as it deems appropriate, and requires all applications to address equipment ownership in their application. When cost effective, the Commission will require applicants to rent equipment.

### **Category 1**

#### Habitat Restoration

Applications consist of: the improvement of fish and wildlife habitat, including, but not limited to, construction of fish screens, weirs, and ladders; drainage or other watershed improvements; gravel and rock removal or placement; construction of irrigation and water distribution systems; earthwork and grading; fencing; planting trees and other vegetation management; and removal of barriers to the migration of fish and wildlife. These projects are considered to be the highest priority of the Commission.

### **Category 2**

#### Protection/Conservation, including Enforcement

Applications consist of: the purchase and maintenance of materials, supplies, or equipment for law enforcement use related to fish and wildlife protection and conservation; and predator control actions for the benefit of fish or wildlife following certification in writing that the proposed actions will significantly benefit a particular wildlife species.

### **Category 3**

#### Public Education

Applications consist of: public education relating to the scientific principles of fish and wildlife conservation, consisting of supervised formal instruction carried out pursuant to a planned curriculum and aids to education such as literature, audio and video recordings, training models, and nature study facilities.

#### Studies/Research

Applications consist of: scientific fish and wildlife research conducted by institutions of higher learning, qualified researchers, or governmental agencies, as approved by the Fish and Game Department.

Propagation

Applications consist of: breeding, raising, purchasing, or releasing fish or wildlife which are to be released upon approval of Fish and Game pursuant to Sections 6400 and 6401 onto land or into waters of local, state, or federal agencies or onto land or into waters open to the public; and Construction, maintenance, and operation of public hatchery facilities.

Rehabilitation

Applications consist of: temporary emergency treatment and care of injured or orphaned wildlife or of wildlife confiscated by Fish and Game as evidence.

Scholarships

The Commission may provide up to two Scholarships with a maximum dollar amount of \$2,500.00 per scholarship (\$5,000 total). This dollar amount may be adjusted with approval of the Commission and Agricultural Commissioner.

Other funding uses as stated in Fish and Game Code section 13103

Expenditures may be approved for the following: reasonable administrative expenditures, which may include office items, printing and postage, commissioner travel expense, and other various expenses. The Commission may not fund projects from this category, except if the Commission elects to hold an outreach and educational event for stakeholders. The budget for this event will be recommended by the Commissioner and approved by the Agricultural Commissioner, up to a maximum of \$3,500.

Contributions to a secret witness program for the purpose of facilitating enforcement of this code and regulations adopted pursuant to this code.

Costs incurred by the district attorney or city attorney in investigating and prosecuting civil and criminal actions for violations of this code, as approved by the department.