



January 8, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of the State of California
1021 O Street, Ste. 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: 2026-27 Budget Request: CDFW's Wolf Program

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of California's livestock producers and rural communities, the above-listed organizations write to respectfully request that \$30 million be allocated to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Wolf Program in the 2026-27 State Budget, assuring that the state is adequately-resourced to promote wolf recovery without jeopardizing livestock production which stewards one-third of the state's lands and which forms the backbone of the state's rural economies.

In 2021, you authorized \$3 million in funding to CDFW for a "wolf conflict compensation pilot program" to assist participating ranchers in paying "for the deterrence of wolf presence near livestock, the impacts of wolf presence on livestock, and for verified loss of livestock."¹ The Wolf-Livestock Compensation Pilot Program subsequently developed by CDFW was robust and well-rounded, hailed by livestock producers and wolf advocates alike. Importantly, nearly 2/3 of all available funding under the Pilot Program went to non-lethal deterrence assistance, mitigating instances of wolf/livestock conflict to the benefit of wolves and ranchers alike.²

Unfortunately, the initial \$3 million in funding for the Wolf-Livestock Compensation Program was exhausted by March of 2024. After receiving only \$600,000 for the Program in the 2024 Budget (AB 108), CDFW scaled back its compensation program to cover only deaths and injuries of livestock caused by wolf attacks – denying ranchers vital non-lethal deterrence tools needed to *prevent* depredations and leaving ranchers un-compensated for less-than-lethal stress impacts of wolf presence upon livestock. While last year's Budget (AB 102) allocated an additional \$2 million in compensation funding, that sum is insufficient to keep pace with the demand for non-lethal deterrence assistance experienced between May 2022 and March 2024, particularly considering California's rapidly-growing wolf population.

Our organizations have worked with the Legislature and your administration in recent years to enhance cost-effective deterrence, for instance via last year's AB 411 (Papan), which will allow ranchers to minimize wolf attractants by composting livestock carcasses rather than 'bone-piling' them. But the unfortunate lethal removal of the Beyem Seyo Pack earlier this year demonstrates that more aggressive proactive *and* responsive non-lethal deterrence is needed to avoid wolves habitually preying on livestock and threatening rural communities. Additionally, recent research out of UC Davis demonstrates that just

¹ SB 170 (Skinner, Chapter 240, Statutes of 2021) (Budget Act of 2021).

² CAL. DEPT. FISH & WILDLIFE, WOLF-LIVESTOCK COMPENSATION PILOT PROGRAM SUMMARY REPORT 3 fig.2 (Apr. 2024).

one wolf can cause up to \$162,000 in annual losses to livestock producers from direct and indirect losses.³

To adequately fund non-lethal deterrence assistance for the protection of wolves and livestock alike and to ensure that ranchers stewarding wolf habitat are not unduly harmed by the increasing presence of wolves on the landscape, our organizations request \$25 million to fully fund CDFW's Wolf-Livestock Compensation Program.

Significant investments are also needed to ensure that CDFW's Wolf Program is properly staffed and resourced. Currently, CDFW's limited Wolf Program staff are spread thin, stymieing Department efforts to adequately monitor wolf populations, conduct outreach to ranchers and rural communities, and investigate suspected depredations, among other duties. Further frustrating CDFW's wolf management efforts, only four of the state's ten wolf packs are currently equipped with working GPS collars. GPS collars aid the Department in assessing wolf recovery, facilitating research, targeting and deploying effective non-lethal deterrence, and determining whether livestock loss compensation is warranted. Unfortunately, ground-based trapping and collaring efforts have often proven unsuccessful, and helicopter capture of wolves – which has proven immensely effective – is costly. Finally, CDFW's deployment of a 'strike team' this summer to haze the Beyem Seyo Pack from livestock at an estimated cost of \$2 million evinces a need for a flexible wolf management fund within the Department.

To ensure that the Department is properly resourced for wolf recovery efforts moving forward, our organizations request \$1 million in funding to augment CDFW's Wolf Program staff, \$960,000 dedicated to collaring efforts (including aerial capture efforts), and \$3 million for a flexible wolf management fund within the Department.

Finally, it is vital that California universities conducting research and outreach regarding wolf recovery be adequately funded. In June of 2024, CDFW began what was envisioned as a "long-term partnership" with the California Wolf Project at the University of California, Berkeley Rausser College of Natural Resources aiming "to advance the science and management of gray wolves" in the state.⁴ According to CDFW, the California Wolf Project's research will document wolf "interactions with other large predators such as mountain lions and bears, and impacts upon native ungulate such as deer and elk," assisting with the Department's broader wildlife conservation efforts. Additionally, the Berkeley researchers' work is projected to improve efficiencies in the state's Wolf-Livestock Compensation Program and enhance CDFW's non-lethal deterrence efforts.⁵

Unfortunately, CDFW currently lacks adequate funding to sustain that "long-term partnership" beyond June of 2026. Thus, we request an additional \$500,000 investment enabling CDFW to continue its valuable partnership with U.C. Berkeley's California Wolf Project.

Similarly, U.C. Cooperative Extension agriculture and natural resources advisors have been on the frontlines of wolf recovery, spearheading research, outreach, and communication with ranchers; liaising

³ Emily C. Dooley, *Novel Study Calculates the Cost to Cattle Ranchers of an Expanding Wolf Population*, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS (Apr. 21, 2025), <https://www.ucdavis.edu/food/news/novel-study-calculates-cost-cattle-ranchers-expanding-wolf-population>.

⁴ News Release, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, "California Wolf Project Will Advance Science and Management of Gray Wolves" (Oct. 29, 2024).

⁵ CAL. DEPT. FISH & WILDLIFE, TEN YEARS OF GRAY WOLF CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT IN CALIFORNIA 31 (2024).

with CDFW; and assisting in the effective deployment of non-lethal deterrents.⁶ Considering the crucial role UCCE advisors have played in promoting human/wolf coexistence, it is vital that they be properly funded to continue this essential work. Thus, we recommend \$300,000 in funding for these programs to continue wolf research and outreach efforts to the ranching community.

Proper funding for CDFW's Wolf Program (and related entities) is vital to ensure that California's growing wolf population, its rural residents, and the producers of the state's fourth largest agricultural commodity continue to thrive. Our organizations are aware that a coalition of wildlife advocates has requested funding for the re-instatement and proper resourcing of the state's successful Human-Wildlife Conflict Program in next year's Budget. To be clear, we strongly support that request, but we believe that adequate funding for the Wolf Program is a necessary element of that broader priority. For these reasons, we request \$30 million in the 2026/27 Budget for the Wolf Program, as outlined above.

Sincerely,



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California Cattlemen's Association



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⁶ For a partial overview of UCCE's efforts to minimize wolf-livestock conflicts, see Laura K. Snell et al., *Ten Years of Wolf-Livestock Interactions and Cooperative Extension Work in Northern California*, 31 PROC. VERTEBRATE PEST CONF. 1 (2024) and *Livestock-Predator Hub*, U.C. RANGELANDS, <https://rangelands.ucdavis.edu/predator-hub> (last visited Dec. 22, 2025).

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