



The California Sportsman's Lobby, Inc.



February 24, 2022

The Honorable Henry Stern, Chair
Senate Natural Resources Committee
California State Senate
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Position: **OPPOSE**

Location: Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee

Re: SB 856 (Dodd) Wild pigs: validations (As Introduced January 19, 2022)

Dear Senator Stern and Committee Members:

The undersigned wildlife conservation organizations must strongly oppose SB 856, as introduced January 19, 2022. We certainly are aware of the significant damage wild pigs can do to property and to wildlife habitats, and we could support reasonable, mutually agreed to mitigation measures. However, we believe that the changes proposed in SB 856, as currently written, are too extreme, would seriously impact the ability of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to successfully manage wild pigs.

We are pleased to note that, at last week's meeting, the California Fish and Game Commission agreed to refer the topic of wild pig management to their Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) without delay for discussion between stakeholders, DFW and Commission staff in an effort to reach consensus on possible wild pig management changes. We believe vetting this matter at the Commission WRC is the proper approach to seeking agreement on future wild pig management and urge no action on SB 856 while this process is in motion.

Our major points of opposition to SB 856, as currently written, are that the bill would:

- Remove the game mammal status of wild pigs and reclassify them as an exotic game mammal, allowing them to be killed in large numbers by nearly any means except poison, while also allowing them to be hunted at night by firearm – greatly diminishing the ability of enforcement to effectively combat the poaching of other game animals at night.
- No longer require landowners or their agents to obtain a permit to kill depredating wild pigs, or to report on the number killed or method of kill – eliminating a critical source of data DFW needs for the effective science-based management of wild pig populations.

- Require DFW to prepare a plan for the management of wild pigs no later than January 1, 2024 – which would not provide DFW adequate time to prepare a comprehensive, effective plan and seriously compromise the ability of DFW staff to complete critically needed management plans for bears, wild sheep, deer, and bobcats that are currently in process.
- Reduce opportunities for the public to successfully hunt wild pigs. Wild pigs are often the first big game hunted by youth and adults new to hunting. Hunting wild pigs is an important means of teaching both youth and adults hunter skills, safety, and sportsmanship.
- Make high fence pig hunts unlawful – eliminating hunting opportunity for those individuals with disabilities or other special needs who do not have the physical ability to hunt other wildlands.
- Likely result in a substantial reduction in the annual revenues deposited into the Big Game Management Account (BGMA) – impacting the annual funding available for programs and projects critical to the health of all big game species.

Wild pigs, though not native to California, established themselves as a viable wild population in California more than one hundred years ago. As such, they would not qualify as exotic under the precedent set for the definition of this term in the Fish and Game Code for other species.

High-fenced hunts are already highly regulated. These hunts provide an opportunity to many, including our most deserving wounded warriors, those with special needs, the elderly, and youth who are physically unable to handle traditional hunts. For us this is a ‘slippery slope’ as we can easily see planted upland game bird hunts next on the list.

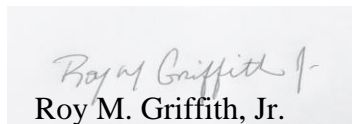
We do support the concept of replacing pig tags with a validation ‘stamp’ but believe the cost of a validation should be set by the Commission following more analysis to ensure validation fees do not unreasonably reduce funding for the BGMA which is critical for research, habitat projects and hunting opportunities for all big game species.

As noted above, we believe the best pathway forward is for DFW to work with all interested stakeholders at the Commission WRC to seek mutually agreeable wild pig management provisions that would alleviate the above outlined concerns without changing the wild pigs game mammal status. Accordingly, we must continue to strongly oppose the extreme changes proposed by SB 856, as introduced.

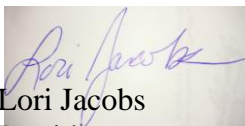
Sincerely,



Fred Harpster
President
Black Brant Group



Roy M. Griffith, Jr.
Legislative Director
California Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc.



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cc: Ms. Hazel Miranda, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Governor's Office
Mr. Dennis O'Connor, Consultant, Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
Mr. Todd Moffitt, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
The Honorable Bill Dodd, Author
Ms. Heather Hopkins, Senator Dodd's Office
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Ms. Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director, California Fish and Game Commission
Mr. Charlton Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mr. Clark Blanchard, Deputy Director, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of
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