STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Budget Change Proposal - Cover Sheet
DF-46 (REV 03/25)

Fiscal Year	Business Unit Number	Department
2026-27	3600	Department of Fish and Wildlife

Hyperion Budget Request Name	Relevant Program or Subprogram
3600-018-BCP-2026-GB	2590

Budget Request Title
Nutria Eradication Program

Budget Request Summary
The California Department of Fish and Wildlife requests 1.0 permanent position, funding for existing staff and temporary help, $8.2 million General Fund in fiscal year 2026-27, and $8 million General Fund in 2027-28 and ongoing, to support the continued and expanded operations of the Nutria Eradication Program which addresses the spread of the invasive nutria species.

Requires Legislation (submit required legislation with the BCP)	Code Section(s) to be Added/Amended/Repealed
☐ Trailer Bill Language ☐ Budget Bill Language ☒ N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.

Does this BCP contain information technology (IT) components? ☐ Yes ☒ No *If yes, departmental Chief Information Officer must sign.*	Department CIO	Date
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.

For IT requests, specify the project number, the most recent project approval document (FSR, SPR, S1BA, S2AA, S3SD, S4PRA), the approval date, and the total project cost.

Project No. Click or tap here to enter text.
Approval Date: Click or tap to enter a date.
Project Approval Document: Click or tap here to enter text.
Total Project Cost: Click or tap here to enter text.

If proposal affects another department, does other department concur with proposal? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Attach comments of affected department, signed and dated by the department director or designee.

Prepared By	Date	Reviewed By	Date
	1/9/2026	Nicole Nelson	1/9/2026
Department Director	**Date**	**Agency Secretary**	**Date**
Valerie Termini	1/9/2026	Bryan Cash	1/9/2026

Department of Finance Use Only

Additional Review: ☐ Capital Outlay ☐ ITCU ☐ FSCU ☐ OSAE ☐ Dept. of Technology

Principal Program Budget Analyst	Date submitted to the Legislature
Andrew Hull	1/9/2026

A. Problem Statement

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Nutria Eradication Program (NEP) is facing two critical issues: 1) nearly 65 percent of the program's funding expires during 2025-26, leaving 19.0 permanent positions and 21.0 temporary staff unfunded, and 2) at current staffing and resource levels, the NEP is able to conduct only ~30 percent of the workload necessary to successfully address the rapidly growing scale of the nutria infestation and make significant progress toward eradication.

Nutria (Myocastor coypus) are large (20+ lb.), semi-aquatic rodents native to South America and highly invasive in the United States. A small infestation of nutria was discovered in the wetlands of Merced County in March 2017. Due to their destructive feeding and burrowing behaviors, even in small numbers nutria can cause extensive damage to wetlands, riparian habitats, restoration projects, levees, water conveyance and flood protection infrastructure, and agriculture. Nutria are primarily active from dusk to dawn, making them often difficult to detect in small numbers. However, nutria are rodents that reproduce early and often; a female nutria can have three litters of up to 13 offspring within just over one year, and those offspring start reproducing at four to five months of age. As a result, the presence of a single pregnant female nutria can turn into a population of 79-200 within approximately 13 months. Because of their extremely high reproductive rate and ability to disperse up to 50 miles, infestations can rapidly expand both in population size and geographic distribution.

The department implemented an emergency response to the nutria infestation in 2018, followed by establishment of a dedicated eradication program through funding received in 2019-20 and 2022-23. The NEP has also been supported by three-year funding approved in 2023-24, a reimbursement agreement from the Sacrament-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy, and a federal grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. However, the three-year funding approved in 2023-24 and the reimbursement agreement, which provides 65 percent of the NEP's funding, expire in 2025-26, leaving 19.0 permanent positions and 21.0 temporary staff unfunded. As of 2026-27, the NEP's ongoing funding will be enough to support only 4.0 field staff; the NEP requires ongoing appropriations to continue its efforts to eradicate nutria from California.

The NEP is responsible for conducting nutria surveys and trapping on over 500,000 acres of suitable habitat, dispersed throughout a project area that now well exceeds 2 million acres and spans from Napa-Sonoma Marshes, throughout the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and valley, east into the foothills, west to O'neill Forebay, and south into Kings County. The NEP is currently operating with 50 staff, but after five years of full-scale operations and analyzing trends in nutria detections and take, the department recognizes that, due to California's extensive hydrologic connectivity, its current level of resources has been insufficient to keep the nutria infestation from growing and spreading. Despite removing over 6,500 nutria (plus 8,041 fetal offspring), from 2023 to 2025, the total number of 40-acre cells with nutria confirmed present doubled and the annual number of nutria taken tripled. In 2024, a record high number of nutria (1,352) were taken, more than was taken in 2022 and 2023 combined, and 2025 is trending similarly with over 1,100 taken so far this calendar year.

The survey and trapping workload facing the department now exceeds the capabilities of current resource levels. At current levels, the department is able to monitor for nutria in only ~160,000 acres of the 500,000+ acres of suitable, hydrologically-connected habitat each year. Concurrent with those survey efforts, staff are also trapping in 150 to 200+ nutria-infested sites each year. On average, it takes multiple staff 7.5 months to remove the nutria from an infested site; roughly 10 percent of those sites, in more densely infested areas, are taking 2.5 years. This extensive workload now represents a tradeoff between trapping existing infestations and surveying in other locations to which nutria may disperse, establish, and start reproducing. The deficit results in undetected infestations rapidly reproducing and expanding to additional new

areas, creating significant new workload that will continue to grow exponentially with the amount of time it takes us to detect and respond.

To be able to adequately respond to the nutria infestation and outpace the current rate of population growth and geographic spread, the NEP requires an augmentation of staffing and funding.

Resource History

Program Budget	**2019-20**	**2020-21**	**2021-22**	**2022-23**	**2023-24**	**2024-25**
Authorized Expenditures (GF appropriations)	1,949	1,624	1,624	1,624	4,544	4,183
Actual Expenditures (GF + grants)	3,360	3,236	3,124	3,791	5,069	5,075
Authorized Positions	29	29	29	29	29	29
Filled Positions	29	29	29	29	29	27
Vacancies	0	0	0	0	0	2
Temp Help Positions Filled (PM=person-months worked)	29 (151 PM)	30 (321 PM)	28 (172 PM)	20 (138 PM)	20 (208 PM)	39 (265PM)

Workload History

Workload Measure	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26*
Acres monitored for nutria presence	161,080	166,880	180,480	126,720	175,480	219,400	51,960
Acres (sites**) with nutria detected	10,280 (257)	13,640 (341)	11,920 (298)	10,280 (257)	20,040 (501)	21,680 (542)	5,600 (140)
Acres (sites**) with nutria trapped	4,760 (119)	6,080 (152)	4,000 (100)	3,960 (99)	6,480 (162)	9,280 (232)	2,200 (55)
Trap nights (=1 trap, set for 1 night)	22,240	34,222	13,861	26,688	33,564	49,467	6,491
Nutria taken	882	1,133	386	562	999	1,530	436
Catch per unit effort (nutria taken per trap night)	.040	.033	.028	.021	.030	.031	.067

*As of 08/17/2025
**Sites = 40-acre cells within a grid overlaying the project area

B. Justification

Nutria are regulated as a detrimental, restricted animal by the department because they pose a threat to native wildlife, the agriculture interests of the state, and to public health and safety, and are an A-rated pest by the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). While the department does not have specific laws that compel action to be taken against nutria, it is incumbent upon the department to protect the diverse fish, wildlife, plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend for their ecological values and use and enjoyment by the public. Additionally, this program serves both private and public landowners and resource managers, including water districts responsible for water conveyance, agriculture producers that rely on water delivery, and reclamation districts charged with maintaining flood protection infrastructure, as well as serves the public interest by protecting water quality and supply.

The Department's NEP is tasked with conducting visual observation and camera surveys to detect the presence of nutria and trapping to remove and ultimately eradicate the invasive species from California's ecosystems. The current scale of the NEP's operations is characterized below:

- Operating at sites scattered throughout an 8.3 million acre project footprint
- Assessed 2.02 million acres for habitat suitability
- Identified 13,612 sites (544,000 acres) of suitable (permanent and seasonal) nutria habitat
    - A "site" is a 40-acre cell within a grid overlaying the entire project area
- Identified an additional 11,814 sites (472,000 acres) of corridor habitat that facilitates nutria dispersal among sites

- Detected nutria in a total of 1,431 unique sites across 11 counties
    - In recent years, detected nutria in over 500 sites per year

At current staffing levels, each year the department is able to:

- Survey only 30 percent of the sites containing suitable, connected nutria habitat
- Implement trapping in only about 30-40 percent of the sites where nutria are detected

If funding for the program is not continued and augmented, the remaining 4.0 NEP field staff will be able to survey approximately 10 percent of what the department has been able to accomplish annually over the past five years. In total, it is estimated the program would be able to adequately monitor only about 16,000 acres (40 sites) per year and implement trapping in only about 20, leaving anywhere from 200, to well over 500, sites containing nutria populations that will continue to reproduce exponentially and spread rapidly, with increasingly detrimental impacts to California's resources and stakeholders. On average, the department has removed 8.7 nutria from each infested site; with four being female. For every nutria-infested site that remains, a population of 9 nutria with an average litter size of 6 will turn into a population of 316 in just over one year; at approximately 500 sites, that is a potential population growth of over 158,000 nutria in just 13 months.

If funding for the program is continued at its current level, annual progress will be reduced by approximately 50 percent since the department will no longer have funding for the temporary help that currently make up half of the field crew and which are supported by the last, expiring federal grant. The state could continue to have unmanaged populations, which would begin to reproduce and spread to new sites at an increasing rate. Trapping efforts would continue to be at the expense of surveying to detect new infestations and vice versa. Based on current data, if funding and resources remain at the current level, the department estimates a potential population growth of 95,000 nutria in as little as 13 months.

For the protection of California's natural resources, water supply, flood protection, and agriculture, it is critical that not only is the NEP's funding continued, but that it be increased to a level that allows the department to operate at a scale that can outpace the population growth and spread of the nutria infestation.

Additionally, to ensure the additional staff can accomplish the intended workload, the NEP also requires additional vehicles to move staff to additional locations through the 8.3-million-acre project area. Depending on the workload, staff either work independently or may work in pairs for safety and efficiency, but if more vehicles are not provided to the NEP the department will need to send groups of people to single locations to work together rather than dispersing to additional locations and waterways on the landscape, as is the need. The NEP currently operates with a total of 28 trucks, 6 of which have been temporarily borrowed, with 3 to 4 of those already surveyed and destined for auction. The NEP cannot feasibly borrow additional vehicles based on necessary utilization. NEP vehicles are utilized five to seven days per week, year-round. Temporary loaner vehicles are not a viable solution to the NEP's needs since our workload and need is daily and year-round. As a result, the department is requesting one-time funding for three 4x4, crew cab pickups.

C. Department-wide and Statewide Considerations

The NEP is vital to providing reliable, clean, and safe water, restoring native ecosystems, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Nutria colonies create extensive burrows, which increase soil erosion and sedimentation, reduce bank stability, and increase the risk of levee failure. These nutria colonies are vectors for disease and parasites transmissible through water supplies. Their herbivory is notorious for causing extensive loss of wetland habitat and soils that are critical for carbon sequestration. Further, this program is consistent with California's State

Wildlife Action Plan, in which invasive species are the most commonly identified pressure across all terrestrial and aquatic conservation targets; direct management of invasive species is one of the strategies most commonly identified as needed to improve ecosystem conditions across California.

The persistence of invasive nutria in California will result in increasingly prevalent impacts to multiple resource sectors, including wildlife and habitat conservation, agriculture, water supplies and conveyance, flood protection, greenhouse gas reduction, and the agencies charged with their management. The California Department of Water Resources, CDFA, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and numerous conservancies will benefit from the NEP through the protection of resources and damage prevention.

D. Outcomes and Accountability

This proposal will allow the department to conduct nutria surveys and trapping at the geographic scale, frequency, and intensity needed to successfully address the expanding nutria infestation. The NEP will no longer have to sacrifice survey capabilities in order to prioritize trapping of existing infestations or vice versa, which will lead to improvements in early detection of nutria and rapid response removals and ultimately reduce the ecological impacts of nutria to California's resources. The NEP will have a direct, onsite supervisor at each of the field offices staff operate out of and will be better equipped with vehicles to cover the areas of interest throughout the project area.

The NEP will begin preparing annual reports of progress made and challenges encountered. Summaries of the Program's efforts and accomplishments will continue to be posted on the department's website.

Projected Outcomes

Workload Measure*	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**2028-29**	**2029-30**	**2030-31**
Acres fully surveyed (per year) for nutria presence**	400,000	420,000	440,000	460,000	480,000
Acres with nutria detected**	20,000	18,000	16,000	15,000	14,000
Acres with nutria trapped**	10,000	9,000	8,000	7,000	6,000

*Future acres/numbers in these categories are entirely dependent upon the number of nutria infested sites found during survey efforts. Therefore, the primary workload measure of importance is the geographic scale of our monitoring efforts.

**Projections are intended to convey expected, general trend. Estimations are not precise.

E. Implementation Plan

Implementation of the proposal would begin July 1, 2026, and/or upon approval of the 2026-27 Budget.

F. Supplemental Information

The department will purchase three vehicles, as follows:

- Three 4x4, crew-cab pickups (gas-fueled), ½-ton or ¾-ton

BCP Fiscal Detail Sheet

(Dollars in Thousands)

BCP Title: Nutria Eradication Program

BR Name: 3600-018-BCP-2026-GB

Budget Request Summary

Personal Services

Personal Services	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
Positions - Permanent	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Total Positions	**0.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**
Salaries and Wages Earnings - Permanent	0	1,476	1,476	1,476	1,476	1,476
Salaries and Wages Earnings - Temporary Help	0	1,632	1,632	1,632	1,632	1,632
Total Salaries and Wages	**$0**	**$3,108**	**$3,108**	**$3,108**	**$3,108**	**$3,108**
Total Staff Benefits	0	1,833	1,833	1,833	1,833	1,833
Total Personal Services	**$0**	**$4,941**	**$4,941**	**$4,941**	**$4,941**	**$4,941**

Operating Expenses and Equipment

Operating Expenses and Equipment	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
5301 - General Expense	0	260	260	260	260	260
5302 - Printing	0	52	52	52	52	52
5304 - Communications	0	52	52	52	52	52
5306 - Postage	0	52	52	52	52	52
5320 - Travel: In-State	0	260	260	260	260	260
5322 - Training	0	260	260	260	260	260
5324 - Facilities Operation	0	572	572	572	572	572
5326 - Utilities	0	104	104	104	104	104
5342 - Departmental Services	0	1,253	1,256	1,256	1,256	1,256
5346 - Information Technology	0	120	104	104	104	104
5368 - Non-Capital Asset Purchases - Equipment	0	48	0	0	0	0
539X - Other	0	189	54	54	54	54
Total Operating Expenses and Equipment	**$0**	**$3,222**	**$3,026**	**$3,026**	**$3,026**	**$3,026**

Total Budget Request

Total Budget Request	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
Total Budget Request	**$0**	**$8,163**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**

Fund Summary

Fund Source

Fund Source	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
State Operations - 0001 - General Fund	0	8,163	7,967	7,967	7,967	7,967
Total State Operations Expenditures	**$0**	**$8,163**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**
Total All Funds	**$0**	**$8,163**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**

Program Summary

Program Funding

Program Funding	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
2590 - Biodiversity Conservation Program	0	8,163	7,967	7,967	7,967	7,967
Total All Programs	**$0**	**$8,163**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**	**$7,967**

Personal Services Details

Positions

Positions	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
0764 - Sr Envirnal Scientist (Supvry) (Eff. 07-01-2026)	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
VR00 - Various	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Positions	**0.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**

Salaries and Wages

Salaries and Wages	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
0764 - Sr Envirnal Scientist (Supvry) (Eff. 07-01-2026)	0	147	147	147	147	147
VR00 - Various	0	2,961	2,961	2,961	2,961	2,961
Total Salaries and Wages	**$0**	**$3,108**	**$3,108**	**$3,108**	**$3,108**	**$3,108**

Staff Benefits

Staff Benefits	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
5150450 - Medicare Taxation	0	65	65	65	65	65
5150500 - OASDI	0	212	212	212	212	212
5150600 - Retirement - General	0	995	995	995	995	995
5150800 - Workers' Compensation	0	65	65	65	65	65
5150900 - Staff Benefits - Other	0	496	496	496	496	496
Total Staff Benefits	**$0**	**$1,833**	**$1,833**	**$1,833**	**$1,833**	**$1,833**

Total Personal Services

Total Personal Services	FY26 Current Year	FY26 Budget Year	FY26 BY+1	FY26 BY+2	FY26 BY+3	FY26 BY+4
Total Personal Services	**$0**	**$4,941**	**$4,941**	**$4,941**	**$4,941**	**$4,941**