

Fish & Game fleet reduction may have unintended consequences

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Conservation groups are warning that Gov. Jerry Brown's plan to slash the state's vehicle fleet could have consequences for California wildlife and their habitats.

The Department of Fish and Game is slated to lose 527 vehicles in the fleet-reduction program, according to preliminary data obtained by the *Bee*. Unlike the take-home or rarely used vehicles primarily targeted by the program, most of the Fish and Game vehicles are special equipment used to conduct research, maintain duck habitat and catch poachers.

According to a spreadsheet identifying the targeted vehicles, state wildlife refuge areas would lose 14 bulldozers, 10 tractors, six graders and three backhoes. These vehicles, though often used only on a seasonal basis, are essential to prepare wetlands for migratory waterfowl, said John Carlson, president of the California Waterfowl Association.

Also slated for elimination are 124 boats statewide that are used for wildlife law enforcement, habitat management, research and oil spill prevention.

Under the program, the vehicles would be auctioned off to generate revenue for the state, which is struggling to balance its budget.

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