

## Hunter Recruitment and Retention

Hunting license sales and the revenues generated by hunting and shooting related purchases are primary funding sources for wildlife conservation in California. Over the past two decades, hunting license sales have dropped 9.3 percent to 291,088, and only one percent of the state's residents 16 and older hunted in California last year. This represents a national trend. The number of active hunters and sport shooters is decreasing and fewer young people are engaging in these sports. Since the decline of these activities has a tremendous impact on the state and the management of its natural resources, efforts to introduce more Californians to shooting sports and to retain those who do participate are critical.

Most Californians support various aspects of hunting. It is believed demographics and urbanization have been the driving force behind decreased hunter participation, specifically, the diminishment of the hunting culture, loss of access to land and the multiple activities today's families participate in that compete with youth and family hunting opportunities.

Another potential contributing factor to the decline is the vocal animal rights community. Many of these groups do not support hunting and do not recognize the value of hunting as a successful, necessary and highly-regulated resource management tool.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has a vested interest in providing hunting opportunities, which will generate revenue, maintain centuries-long traditions, and inform youth and others that do not currently recognize the importance of resource conservation and the benefits from outdoor activity and shared family experiences. Through DFG's Hunter Education program, new and advancing hunters learn about conservation, safe hunting practices, and the obligation of every Californian to protect and respect the state's resources. The program is run by DFG's Law Enforcement Division. DFG works closely with the 800 volunteer hunter education instructors who teach approximately 30,000 students annually. Through partnerships at the local, state and federal level, DFG provides opportunities for entire families to learn about and enjoy shooting sports, and continues to encourage more access to lands for these activities. Additionally, DFG's outreach programs target a broad spectrum of constituents, and provide information and opportunities for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities.