Upheaval reveals shift in Calif. wildlife policy

By Peter Fimrite, San Francisco Chronicle

The sudden resignation of the most adamant defender of hunting and fishing on the California Fish and Game Commission could put the finishing touches on a sweeping philosophical shift in the way the state views wildlife, sets rules for fishing and controls predators like mountain lions and wolves.

Commissioner Jim Kellogg retired in late December in frustration over what he termed a lack of consideration for the sportsmen and women he represents. The resignation – combined with the unrelated recent departures of commission President Jack Baylis and Sonke Mastrup, the commission's executive director – sets the stage for Gov. Jerry Brown to appoint conservationists to the increasingly pivotal state board.

Such a move may, observers say, complete the transformation of the commission from an organization that advocates for fishing and hunting to one that safeguards endangered species, preserves habitat and protects California's top predators from slaughter.

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