

Economic Impact Analysis Report

Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California

The bass fisheries play a vital role in the sport fishing industry in southern California. Barred sand bass and kelp bass usually represent the top three or four sport-caught fishes in southern California, and are extremely popular with many anglers. From 2004 to 2011, these two species alone comprised 12 percent of the total recreational catch in southern California. All three of the proposed options will reduce take and have an economic impact as follows:

An increase in the minimum size limit (Option 1) will result in fewer bass taken, but it seems unlikely that it would result in the elimination of jobs or businesses. The minimum size increase is not expected to reduce the number of anglers aboard Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessels (CPFVs) and rental boats to the same extent that a reduction in the bag limit would because the opportunity to catch larger fish still exists.

The immediate prospect of taking fewer fish home due to a bag limit reduction (Option 2) may deter some anglers from fishing, resulting in fewer anglers purchasing CPFV trip tickets and/or renting boats. However, based on data collected by the California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS) from 2004 to 2011, a moderate bag reduction would not significantly reduce catches. On fishing trips where barred sand bass were targeted or caught, 91 percent of bags contained three barred sand bass or fewer, and on trips where kelp bass were targeted or caught, 90 percent of bags contained one or no kelp bass. Because there is some support by the recreational fishing community for a reduction in the bag limit, it is unknown whether a significant number of customers would actually choose not to fish due to a moderate reduction in the bag limit and if so, whether it would necessitate the elimination of jobs or businesses. A severe reduction in the bag limit (e.g., zero take) would most likely result in the loss of jobs and the elimination of businesses.

A barred sand bass season closure (Option 3) may also result in the loss of jobs or businesses, depending on actual customer interest (fishing for barred sand bass versus other species) and revenue lost. During the summer fishing season, several sport fishing landings operate additional "twilight" trips that primarily target barred sand bass. These trips are very popular and attract many anglers. With this option, there may be less interest from anglers, fewer anglers taking these trips, and landings canceling barred sand bass trips all together. It is unknown what percentage of total revenue is generated by half day and twilight trips targeting barred sand bass during summer months. If the revenue constitutes a high percentage, then cancellation of barred sand bass trips could

result in the loss of jobs or businesses, depending on the timing and duration of the closure.

A complete closure of the barred sand bass fishery for the entire spawning season (June-August) would have the greatest impact on the recreational fishery in southern California. To estimate the number of trips that may be lost due to a complete spawning season closure of the fishery, CPFV logbook data from 2011 were analyzed. Approximately 39 percent of all CPFV fishing trips in southern California in 2011 occurred from June to August (excluding multi-day trips). Of these, one or more barred sand bass were caught on 3,302 trips. However, the estimated number of trips targeting barred sand bass (e.g., those representing 50 percent or more of the catch) was 1,026 trips. This estimate represents 5.7 percent of the total annual trips that could be cancelled due to an entire spawning season closure. It is unknown what portion of annual revenue these trips constitute. In addition, there are more anglers per trip in the summer (June-August) which could increase lost revenues. Landings that are in the closest proximity to the spawning aggregation areas would likely feel the economic impact more than other landings. A complete spawning season closure for barred sand bass would likely result in lost jobs and possibly lost businesses.

Under a partial season closure, it seems likely that CPFV businesses would choose to continue their regular schedule and fish for other species, resulting in no loss of jobs or businesses. A two week closure of barred sand bass during peak spawning activity (July 17 to July 31) would have substantially less impact on the southern California businesses than a full spawning season closure. According to CPFV logbook data, approximately seven percent of all fishing trips in southern California in 2011 occurred during the last 14 days of July (excluding multi-day trips). Of these, one or more barred sand bass were caught on 697 trips (53 percent). However, only 261 of these trips had barred sand bass counts comprising 50 percent or more of the catch, which represents a potential loss of 0.01 percent of the total trips taken in southern California. While a spawning season closure may have the greatest short term economic impact, it also may have the greatest impact on the recovery of the fishery.

If CPFV and other trips are canceled due to the implementation of these options, this could also negatively impact other small businesses that collect and distribute live bait, manufacture bass-specific tackle, etc. However, the degree of impact is highly speculative in nature and cannot be quantified.

The impacted businesses are generally small businesses employing few individuals and, like all small businesses, are subject to failure for a variety of causes. Additionally, the long-term intent of the proposed actions is to increase sustainability of the bass fisheries and, subsequently, the long-term viability of these same small businesses.

Benefits of the Regulation:

Benefits to the Environment: Sustainable Management of Bass Resources

It is the policy of this state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of the living resources of the ocean and inland waters under the jurisdiction and influence of the state for the benefit of all the citizens of the state and to promote the development of local California fisheries. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, rebuilding depressed stocks and achieving the sustainable use of the state's fishery resources. Where a species is the object of sportfishing, a sufficient resource shall be maintained to support reasonable sport use, taking into consideration the necessity of regulating individual sport fishery bag limits to the quantity that is sufficient to provide a satisfying sport. Adoption of scientifically-based size limits, bag limits, and seasons provides for the maintenance of sufficient populations of basses to ensure the continued sustainability of these resources.

Benefits to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

The Commission anticipates benefits to the health and welfare of California residents. While fish are a nutritious food, there are current health advisories recommending limited consumption of a few species in southern California, including kelp bass and barred sand bass, due to contaminants in their tissues. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) advises consumption of no more than one to two servings per week of barred sand bass and kelp bass from Ventura harbor to Santa Monica Pier and south of Seal Beach pier to San Mateo Point. Within this area, only one serving of kelp bass and no servings of barred sand bass are recommended from Santa Monica Beach south of Santa Monica Pier to Seal Beach Pier. Limiting take of these fishes through these options will help residents comply with these health advisories.

Bass fishing contributes to increased mental health of its practitioners as fishing is a hobby and form of relaxation for many. Fishing for basses also provides opportunities for multi-generational family activities and promotes respect for California's environment by the future stewards of California's natural resources.