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Although the Department has concern with a blanket authorization to use spearfishing gear for striped bass in inland waters, considerations are different for ocean waters. Spearfishing is generally authorized as a method of take for finfish in the ocean, pursuant to Section 28.90. The Department's understanding is that the current prohibition on spearfishing striped bass came about due to a need to specially regulate anadromous species which were the target of sport fisheries, including salmon, sturgeon, and striped bass. Today, the Department believes that any additional harvest of striped bass that may result from spearfishing in the ocean would be sustainable given the present status of the striped bass resource. Also, because spearfishing is a highly selective method of take, the Department does not anticipate that increases in fishing effort on striped bass would have unintended consequences on other species.

For purposes of clarity and consistency, the Department recommends, that if the Commission decides to authorize spearfishing for striped bass, it can also take action to amend Section 28.95. The proposed change would remove striped bass from the list of species that may not be taken with bow and arrow fishing tackle.

Proposal Overview

In response to requests by individuals and various sport fishing groups, the Department has prepared the following proposal for consideration:

ALLOW HARVEST OF STRIPED BASS BY SPEARFISHING AND BOW AND ARROW FISHING TACKLE

Amend Section 27.85, Striped Bass. This Section would be amended to allow the harvest of striped bass by spearfishing and bow and arrow fishing tackle that are otherwise prohibited under existing regulations for ocean waters.

Amend Section 28.90, Diving, Spearfishing. This section would be amended to remove striped bass from the list of finfish species that may not be taken by spearfishing.

Amend Section 28.95, Spears, Harpoons and Bow and Arrow Fishing Tackle. This section would be amended to remove striped bass from the list of species that may not be taken by bow and arrow fishing tackle.

(b) Anticipated Benefits

The benefits of the proposed regulations are increased fishing opportunities for striped bass, continuation of sustainable management of

sport fishing resources, protection of listed and special status species, and promotion of businesses that rely on California's sport fisheries.

The proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations.

The Commission does not anticipate non-monetary benefits to the protection of public health and safety, worker safety, the prevention of discrimination, the promotion of fairness or social equity and the increase in openness and transparency in business and government.

- (c) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation:

Authority: Sections 200, 202, 205, 215 and 220, Fish and Game.

Reference: Sections 200, 202, 205, and 220, Fish and Game Code.

- (d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change:

None.

- (e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change:

None.

- (f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication:

No public meetings were held specifically on the topic of spearfishing for striped bass prior to the notice publication. The 45-day comment period provides adequate time for review of the proposed amendments.

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action:

- (a) Alternatives to Regulation Change:

No alternatives were identified.

- (b) No Change Alternative:

The no change alternative would leave existing regulations in place without allowance for use of spear or bow and arrow fishing tackle for taking striped bass in ocean waters.

- (c) Consideration of Alternatives:

In view of the information currently possessed, no reasonable alternative considered would be more effective carrying out the purposes, for which the regulation is proposed, would be as effective, would be less

burdensome to affected private persons, would be more cost-effective to the affected private persons, or equally effective for implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action:

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment. Therefore, no mitigation is necessary.

VI. Impact of Regulatory Action:

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

(a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States:

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed changes are consistent with the continued preservation of the resource and therefore should prevent adverse economic impacts.

(b) Impact on the 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; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment:

The Commission does not anticipate any significant impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs, the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses or the expansion of businesses in California. The impacted businesses are generally small businesses employing few individuals and, like all small businesses, are subject to failure for a variety of causes which may or may not include changes to fishing regulations. Additionally, the long-term intent of the proposed action is to provide for increased opportunity for sustainable harvest of fishable stocks and, subsequently, the promotion and long-term viability of these same small businesses.

The Commission anticipates benefits to the health and welfare of California residents. Providing opportunities to participate in sport fisheries fosters conservation through education and appreciation of California's wildlife.

The Commission does not anticipate any non-monetary benefits to worker

safety.

The Commission anticipates benefits to the environment by the sustainable management of California's sport fishing resources.

(c) Cost Impacts on a Representative Private Person or Business:

The agency is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action.

(d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State:

None.

(e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies:

None.

(f) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts:

None.

(g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be Reimbursed Under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4, Government Code:

None.

(h) Effect on Housing Costs:

None.

Informative Digest (Policy Statement Overview)

Existing law authorizes the take of striped bass for recreational purposes with a sport fishing license subject to regulations prescribed by the Fish and Game Commission (Commission); commercial take of striped bass is prohibited. Current regulations specify size limit, bag and possession limit, and methods of take in ocean waters [Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), Sections 27.85, 28.90, and 28.95].

In ocean waters, Section 27.85 provides for a bag limit of two, a minimum size limit of 18 inches total length north of Pt. Conception, no minimum size limit south of Pt. Conception, and no seasonal closures. Furthermore, striped bass may not be taken while using a sinker over four pounds and may be taken only by angling [Title 14, CCR, Section 1.05].

Section 28.90 specifies fishing provisions while diving and prohibits the take of striped bass by spearfishing. Additionally, Section 28.95 authorizes taking of finfish species by spears, harpoons, and bow and arrow fishing tackle, and identifies prohibited finfish species including striped bass.

At its April meeting, the Commission took testimony regarding the upcoming Sport Fishing Review Cycle. Following public comments, the Commission directed the Department to prepare options that would allow the take of striped bass while spearfishing, indicating its intent to consider changes to the existing regulations which prohibit this method of take for this species.

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Anticipated Benefits

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