STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
INITIAL STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR REGULATORY ACTION
(Pre-Publication of Notice Statement)

Amend Subsection 360(b), Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR)
Re: Deer: X-Zone Hunts

I. Date of Initial Statement of Reasons: November 15, 2011

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings:

(a) Notice Hearing: Date: December 15, 2011
    Location: San Diego

(b) Discussion Hearing: Date: March 7, 2012
    Location: Riverside

(c) Adoption Hearing: Date: April 11, 2012
    Location: Eureka

III. Description of Regulatory Action:

(a) Statement of Specific Purpose of Regulation Change and Factual Basis for
    Determining that Regulation Change is Reasonably Necessary:

1. Number of Tags

   Existing regulations provide for the number of hunting tags for the X
   zones. The proposal changes the number of tags for all existing zones to
   a series of ranges as indicated in the table in the Informative Digest.

   The proposal provides a range of tag numbers for each zone from which a
   final number will be determined, based on the post-winter status of each
   deer herd. These ranges are necessary, as the final number of tags
   cannot be determined until spring herd data are collected in March/April.

   In early spring, surveys of deer herds are conducted to determine the
   proportion of fawns that have survived the winter. This information is used
   in conjunction with the prior year harvest and fall herd composition data to
   estimate overall herd size, sex and age ratios, and the predicted number
   of bucks available next season. The number of bucks and does needs to
   be estimated prior to the hunting season to determine how many surplus
   bucks will exist over and above the number required to maintain the
desired buck ratio objectives stated in the approved deer herd management plans.

The actual tag numbers for each affected zone will be reflected in the Final Statement of Reasons and will be selected from the range of values provided by this proposal. The number of tags is intended to allow the appropriate level of hunting opportunity and harvest of bucks in the population, while achieving or maintaining the buck ratios at, or near, objective levels set forth in the approved deer herd management plans. These final values for the license tag numbers will be based upon findings from the annual harvest and herd composition counts. However, under circumstances where severe winter conditions adversely effect herd recruitment and over-winter adult survival, final tag quotas may fall below the proposed tag range into the “Low Kill” alternative identified in the 2007 Environmental Document Regarding Deer Hunting.

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

Authority: Sections 200, 202, 203, 220, 460, 3452, 3453, and 4334, Fish and Game Code.

(c) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change:

None.

(d) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change:

None were identified

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

The Department conducted a public scoping session in Sacramento on October 11, 2006 and November 18, 2010. Public input, discussions and recommendations regarding the environmental document and mammal hunting and trapping regulations were taken at this time.

Additionally, in 2000, the Department of Fish and Game held a total of twenty-three (23) “Deer Stakeholder” meetings throughout the State. The meetings were open to the public and the Department provided information on a variety of deer management strategies and issues including: Deer Assessment Unit (zone complex) planning and tag draw method alternatives. Attendees were asked to participate in a survey and public comment was also received. The Department also conducted four public meetings at which regulation change
concepts and specific proposals for mammals, furbearers, including deer were discussed, and additional public comment was received.

While these meetings were conducted prior to the establishment of current and proposed regulations, the concepts and proposals which were derived through these meetings are still being implemented as part of the current year regulatory process.

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action:

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change:

1. Number of Tags

   There is no reasonable alternative to the proposed action.

(b) No Change Alternative:

1. Number of Tags

   The no change alternative was considered and found inadequate to attain the project objectives. Retaining the current number of tags for the zones listed may not be responsive to changes in the status of the herds. The deer herd management plans specify objective levels for the proportion of bucks in the herds. These ratios are maintained and managed in part by modifying the number of tags. The no change alternative would not allow management of the desired proportion of bucks stated in the approved deer herd management plans.

(c) Consideration of Alternatives:

   In view of information currently possessed, no reasonable alternative considered would be more effective in carrying out the purposes for which the regulation is proposed, or would be effective as and less burdensome to the affected private persons than the proposed regulation.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action:

   The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

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 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 Businessmen 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 action adjusts tag quotas for existing hunts. Given the number of tags available and the area over which they are distributed, these proposals are economically neutral to business.

(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:

None.

(c) Cost Impacts on Private Persons:

The agency is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person 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) Other 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:

None.
(h) Effect on Housing Costs:

None.
Existing regulations provide for the number of hunting tags for the X zones. The proposal changes the number of tags for all existing zones to a series of ranges presented in the following table. These ranges are necessary, as the final number of tags cannot be determined until spring herd data are collected in March/April. Because severe winter conditions can have an adverse effect on herd recruitment and over-winter adult survival, final tag quotas may fall below the proposed range into the “Low Kill” alternative identified in the 2007 Environmental Document Regarding Deer Hunting..

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