

TITLE 14. Fish and Game Commission
Notice of Proposed Changes in Regulations

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Fish and Game Commission (Commission), pursuant to the authority vested by Section 7110 of the Fish and Game Code and to implement, interpret or make specific said section of said Code, proposes to add Section 1.95, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), relating to a process to conform State recreational fishing regulations to federal regulations.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S. Code §1801 et seq.), the federal government exercises exclusive jurisdiction over fishery resources from 3 to 200 miles offshore. However, because these fish stocks also live in State waters, it is important to have consistent State and federal regulations establishing season dates and other management measures, and also important that the State and federal regulations be effective concurrently. Consistency of rules in adjacent waters allows for uniformity of enforcement, minimizes confusion, and allows for a comprehensive approach to resource management. Consistency with federal regulations is also necessary to maintain State authority over its fisheries and avoid federal preemption under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act [16 USC §1856 (b)(1)].

Under current State law (Fish and Game Code Section 7110) the Commission has authority to establish through regulation an automatic process to conform State recreational fishing regulations applicable in State waters (zero to three miles offshore) to federal regulations. The conforming actions implemented pursuant to the automatic process are exempt from the Administrative Procedure Act [Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of the Government Code].

Federal regulations may be adopted annually and may be amended more often, if necessary, and serve to implement fishery management measures adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. These measures include those for recreational fishing in federal waters off California.

For species managed under federal fishery management plans or regulations, the Commission has usually taken concurrent action to conform State recreational regulations to federal regulations that have been adopted through an open and deliberative federal rulemaking process, which includes a detailed review of economic impacts. Conforming State recreational regulations is done in recognition of federal jurisdiction and to ensure consistency and ease of use for constituents who are subject to both State and federal laws while fishing, or possessing sport fish. However, the dual process is redundant and inefficient, and historically the lag between federal action and conforming State action has created a period of management inconsistency and confusion. To improve regulatory efficiency, Fish and Game Code Section 7110 was enacted with the goal of reducing redundancies between State and federal rulemaking processes for these species.

Current recreational fishing regulations for salmon and Pacific halibut are a conglomerate of State regulations that conform to federal regulations, and State regulations that are more restrictive than and not in conflict with federal regulations, including State regulations that cover aspects not addressed in federal regulations.

Proposed Regulations

Section 1.95 will be added to Title 14, CCR, to describe the process through which State recreational fishing regulations for salmon and Pacific halibut will automatically conform to federal regulations.

The proposed regulation provides that recreational regulations for salmon and Pacific halibut established through the automatic conformance process shall govern unless the Commission adopts regulations using the regular rulemaking process [Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code] and specifically declares at the time of adoption the intent to deviate from the automatic conformance process.

The proposed regulations describe the two processes by which State recreational fishing regulations for salmon and Pacific halibut may conform to federal regulations: the standard conformance process to be used for annual regulations, or corrections to annual regulations, and the conformance process to be used for in-season changes to regulations.

The proposed regulation specifies that the effective date of State regulations conformed pursuant to the automatic conformance process will be the same as the effective date of the federal regulation.

The proposed regulation specifies that nothing in Section 1.95 controls the adoption or validity of Commission regulations pertaining to the identified species on matters that the federal regulations do not address.

Existing species-specific regulations will remain in Title 14. In the future, these sections may be amended to conform to federal regulations pursuant to the process described in Section 1.95, or may be amended pursuant to the regular rulemaking process, as desired by the Commission.

Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

The proposed regulations will help reduce or eliminate the delay between federal action and conforming State action which leads to a period of management inconsistency and confusion between regulations for federal and State ocean waters. Timely conformance also eliminates the potential for a preemption issued under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Act, and reduces redundant workload for the State.

The proposed regulation may result in future benefits to the environment by the timely conformance to federal regulation, resulting in the sustainable management of California's fish resources.

Compatibility with Existing State Regulations

The proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing State regulations. The Legislature has delegated authority to the Commission to adopt recreational fishing regulations in general (Fish and Game Code Sections 200, 205 and 265); and an automatic process to conform State recreational fishing regulations to federal regulations (Fish and Game Code Section 7110). Commission staff has searched the California Code of Regulations and has found no other State regulations related to conforming recreational fishing regulation to federal regulations.

NOTICE IS GIVEN that any person interested may present statements, orally or in writing, relevant to this action at a hearing to be held in the Howonquet Hall Community Center, 101 Indian Court, Smith River, California, on Thursday, June 22, 2017, at 8:00 a.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that any person interested may present statements, orally or in writing, relevant to this action at a hearing to be held in the Resources Building Auditorium, First Floor, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, California, on Thursday, August 17, 2017, at 8:00 a.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard. It is requested, but not required, that written comments be submitted on or before 5:00 p.m. on August 3, 2017, at the address given below, or by email to FGC@fgc.ca.gov. **Written comments mailed, delivered, or emailed to the Commission office, must be received before 12:00 noon on August 11, 2017.** All comments must be received no later than August 17, 2017, at the hearing in Sacramento, California. If you would like copies of any modifications to this proposal, please include your name and mailing address.

Availability of Documents

Copies of the Notice of Proposed Action, the Initial Statement of Reasons, and the text of the regulation in underline and strikeout format can be accessed through our website at www.fgc.ca.gov. The regulations as well as all related documents upon which the proposal is based (rulemaking file), are on file and available for public review from the agency representative, Valerie Termini, Executive Director, Fish and Game Commission, 1416 Ninth Street, Box 944209, Sacramento, California 94244-2090, phone (916) 653-4899. Please direct requests for the above mentioned documents and inquiries concerning the regulatory process to Valerie Termini or Sherrie Fonbuena at the preceding address or phone number. **Sherrie Fonbuena, phone (916) 653-4899, has been designated to respond to questions on the substance of the proposed regulations.**

Availability of Modified Text

If the regulations adopted by the Commission differ from but are sufficiently related to the action proposed, they will be available to the public for at least 15 days prior to the date of adoption. Any person interested may obtain a copy of said regulations prior to the date of adoption by contacting the agency representative named herein.

If the regulatory proposal is adopted, the final statement of reasons may be obtained from the address above when it has been received from the agency program staff.

Impact of Regulatory Action/Results of the Economic Impact Assessment

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 Business, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States:

The proposed action will not have a significant adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed regulation prescribes a procedure the Commission may use to conform State recreational fishing regulations to federal regulations.

- (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:

The Commission does not anticipate any impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs in California.

The Commission does not anticipate any impacts on the creation of new businesses, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California.

The Commission does not anticipate benefits to the health and welfare of California residents.

The Commission anticipates future benefits to the environment by the timely conformance to federal regulation, resulting in the sustainable management of California's fish resources.

The Commission does not anticipate any benefits to worker safety.

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

The Commission 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:

The Commission expects time savings for existing staff that will permit both the Commission and Department to devote more staff resources to achieving other core mandates.

- (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.

Effect on Small Business

It has been determined that the adoption of these regulations may affect small business. The Commission has drafted the regulations in Plain English pursuant to Government Code Sections 11342.580 and 11346.2(a)(1).

Consideration of Alternatives

The Commission must determine that no reasonable alternative considered by the Commission, or that has otherwise been identified and brought to the attention of the Commission, would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the action is proposed, would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the proposed action, or would be more cost effective to affected private persons and equally effective in implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law.

FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

Dated: May 3, 2017

Valerie Termini
Executive Director