

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 Sections 200, 203, 265 and 355 of the Fish and Game Code and to implement, interpret or make specific sections 200, 203, 203.1, 265, 270, 355 and 356 of said Code, proposes to amend subsections 300(a)(1)(D)5. and 6.; 300(a)(2)(D)3.; and 300(a)(3)(F)3.; and add Section 716, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, relating to Sage Grouse Preference Points and Draw.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) proposes to establish an electronic random drawing for sage grouse permits that will include a preference point system similar to the Big Game Preference Point process. Due to the very limited number of sage grouse hunting permits made available annually, the chances of being successfully drawn have been and continue to be very low in a purely random draw. A petition was filed with the Commission (Petition 2016-010) requesting establishment of a preference point component to increase the probability of drawing success for hunters who have previously (often over many years) applied but not been successfully drawn. The addition of preference points for past participants is necessary to fairly credit prior effort and to encourage continued drawing participation for this unique hunting experience. This new process will be conducted through the Automated License Data System (ALDS).

- Section 300 will be amended, deleting the current draw described in subsection 300(a)(1)(D)5 and a reference will be made to the provisions of the new Section 716 Sage Grouse Permit Application and Drawing Process
- Subsection 300(a)(2)(D)6 Falconry Only Permits is deleted and moved to the new Section 716(b)(6).
- Section 716 will be added, setting forth the draw requirements and the addition of preference points for past participants. This new process will be conducted through the Automated License Data System (ALDS).
 - Fifty percent (50%) of the individual zone permit quota shall be awarded using a preference point drawing. This fairly credits prior effort and encourages continued drawing participation for this unique hunting experience.
 - Fifty percent (50%) of the individual zone permit quota shall be awarded using a random drawing. Continuing to have a random draw allows all applicants (with or without points) a chance to be successful in the draw; this encourages the participation of new applicants.

Benefits of the regulations

The Commission anticipates benefits to the health and welfare of California residents. The ALDS provides a single location for the public to apply for all department hunts including big game, upland game special hunts and waterfowl hunting opportunities. Data collected and compiled through the ALDS will be accessible in a consistent format for the Department's use. Adding the sage grouse drawing with preference points to the ALDS will provide the same

benefits of fairness and flexibility as well as important information necessary to properly manage upland game bird populations.

The Commission anticipates benefits to the State's environment in the sustainable management of natural resources. Adoption of regulations to increase sustainable hunting opportunity provides for the maintenance of sufficient populations of game birds to ensure their continued existence.

Consistency and Compatibility with State Regulations

The Fish and Game Commission, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Sections 200 and 203, has the sole authority to regulate hunting in California. Commission staff has searched the California Code of Regulations and has found the proposed changes pertaining to preference points for wild sage grouse hunting opportunities through the ALDS to be consistent with the provisions of Title 14. Therefore the Commission has determined that the proposed amendments are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state 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 Resources Building, Auditorium, First Floor, 1416 Ninth Street Sacramento California, on Thursday, June 21, 2018, 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 River Lodge Conference Center, 1800 Riverwalk Drive, Fortuna, California, on Thursday, August 23, 2018, 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 9, 2018, at the address given below, or by email to FGC@fgc.ca.gov. Written comments mailed (to Fish and Game Commission, PO Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090), or emailed to the Commission office, must be received before 12:00 noon on August 17, 2018. All comments must be received no later than August 23, 2018, at the hearing in Fortuna, California. If you would like copies of any modifications to this proposal, please include your name and mailing address.

Availability of Documents

The Initial Statement of Reasons, text of 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 Jon Snellstrom at the preceding address or phone number. **Scott Gardner, Senior Environmental Scientist, (916) 801-6257**, has been designated to respond to questions on the substance of the proposed Waterfowl hunting regulations. Copies of the Notice of Proposed Action, the Initial Statement of Reasons, and the text of the regulation in underline and strikeout can be accessed through our website at <http://www.fgc.ca.gov>.

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.

Circumstances beyond the control of the Commission (e.g., timing of Federal regulation adoption, timing of resource data collection, timelines do not allow, etc.) or changes made to be responsive to public recommendation and comments during the regulatory process may preclude full compliance with the 15-day comment period, and the Commission will exercise its powers under Section 202 of the Fish and Game Code. Regulations adopted pursuant to this section are not subject to the time periods for adoption, amendment or repeal of regulations prescribed in Sections 11343.4, 11346.4 and 11346.8 of the Government Code. 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 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 businesses, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed action incorporates the sage grouse permit draw into the existing special hunt drawing process that includes preference points through the use of the ALDS. The proposed action will not impose costs on businesses and is not anticipated to change the number of hunting trips or expenditures thus it will be 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; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment:

The Commission anticipates benefits to the health and welfare of California residents. Adding the preference point component to the existing sage grouse permit drawing in the ALDS will provide the benefits of fairness and flexibility as well as important information necessary to properly manage sage grouse permits.

The Commission does not anticipate any 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 since the proposed action will not impact costs or revenues to businesses. The Commission does not anticipate any benefits to worker safety since the proposed action will not affect working conditions.

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

Upland game bird hunters who choose to participate in the sage grouse hunt draw will

pay a nonrefundable \$2.25 application fee, as currently set forth in subsection 702(c)(1)(X). The application fee was established per statute to recover all reasonable administrative costs of developing and implementing a draw with preference points for upland game bird hunts. The Commission is not aware of any cost impacts that a 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 proposed action will not induce changes in costs or savings to state agencies or in federal funding to the state. The anticipated sale of 500 to 1,000 items at \$2.25 each may result in an average increase in annual revenue of approximately \$1,688 for the first year and in the following two years. The projected fee revenue is set to recover all reasonable administrative costs to the Department to administer the sage grouse permit draw within the upland game bird system.

(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 11, 2018

Valerie Termini
Executive Director