

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 4150, Fish and Game Code and to implement, interpret or make specific Section 473; Title 14, California Code of Regulations, relating to Possession of Nongame Animals: Nutria regulations.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

This amendment of Section 473 would ban the possession of live nutria to prevent new introductions of nutria in the state. Nutria affect the State's wildlife by damaging wetland habitats, and put waterways, water supplies, water conveyance and flood protection infrastructure, and agriculture at risk from damage through their burrowing and herbivory of aquatic vegetation. The Department has implemented a multimillion-dollar nutria eradication program, and this regulation is an integral part of this effort.

Possession of nutria is only possible under a permit issued by the Department. But the permit denial provisions in California Code of Regulations, Title 14, subsection 671.1(c)(5), sections 670 and 650 have no provisions for banning the possession of live nutria in California.

Section 473 provides exceptions to FGC 4150, allowing for the possession of legally taken non-game birds and mammals, including rodents such as nutria, but not prohibiting the possession of live nutria pursuant to a Department-issued permit. Thus, the Commission proposes an addition to subsection 473(b) stating:

“It is unlawful to possess live nutria (*Myocastor coypus*), and the Department shall not issue any permit authorizing possession of any live nutria.”

Goals and Benefits of the Regulation:

The goal of this regulation change is to prevent the possession of live nutria in California. This regulation will benefit the Department, the State, and its resources, by reducing the potential for future, additional introductions via released or escaped nutria. Ultimately, this regulation protects California's wetlands, waterways, infrastructure, water supplies, human health and safety, and agriculture.

Consistency with State Regulations

The Commission and Department have conducted a review of the California Code of Regulations and determined that the proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing State regulations. No other State agency has the statutory authority to amend regulations pertaining to the herring fishery.

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 Rincon Government Center, One Government Center Lane, Valley Center, California, on Wednesday, October 9, 2019, 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 Natural Resources Building Auditorium, First Floor, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, California, on Wednesday, December 11, 2019, 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 noon December 6, 2019 at the address given below, or by email to FGC@fgc.ca.gov. All comments (both oral and written) must be received no later than December 11, 2019, at the hearing in Sacramento, California. If you would like copies of any modifications to this proposal, please include your name and mailing address. **Mailed comments should be addressed to Fish and Game Commission, P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090.**

Availability of Documents

Copies of the Notice of Proposed Action, the Initial Statement of Reasons, and the text of the regulation in underline and strikethrough format can be accessed through the Commission 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, Melissa Miller-Henson, Acting Executive Director, Fish and Game Commission, 1416 Ninth Street, P.O. 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 Melissa Miller-Henson or Jon Snellstrom at the preceding address or phone number. **Valerie Cook, Nutria Eradication Incident Commander, telephone at 916-654-4267 or email Valerie.Cook@wildlife.ca.gov, 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. 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 265 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, 11346.8 and 11347.1 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 business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed action is an additional component of the state's nutria eradication program that is anticipated to minimize the costly risks to infrastructure and resources that nutria pose. Reducing the potential for the spread of escaped nutria should help protect California's business activities that draw upon well-functioning wetlands, waterways, infrastructure, and water supplies, such as agriculture and associated businesses.

- (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 no impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state and no impact on the creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses because the proposed amendment is anticipated to aid in the preservation of existing water infrastructure with no cost to current business activities. The Commission anticipates benefits to the health and welfare of California residents by the protection of water supplies. The proposed action is not anticipated to directly affect worker safety. The Commission anticipates benefits to the State's environment by supporting strategies that further the control of invasive species.

- (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:

No new costs to the State. Additionally, the proposed action will aid in the prevention of future importations and releases, preventing loss of state agency and/or federal funding to response costs.

- (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: August 13, 2019

David Thesell
Program Manager