

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, 205, 219, 265 and 275 of the Fish and Game Code and to implement, interpret or make specific Sections 110, 200, 205, 219, 255, 265, 270 and 275 of said Code, proposes to amend Section 28.30, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, relating to recreational take of barred sand bass.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

The barred sand bass fishery is a historic recreational fishery in southern California that is open year-round and managed collectively with kelp bass and spotted sand bass. Current regulations include a five-fish bag limit (in any combination of the three species) and a minimum size limit of 14 inches (35.6 centimeters); these were established in 2013 due to concerns about the status of kelp bass and barred sand bass stocks. While no formal stock assessment exists for barred sand bass, abundance estimates, based on fishery independent data, suggest a severely depressed population in southern California. The presumed decline is likely due to a combination of environmental conditions, poor recruitment, and fishing pressure on easily targeted spawning aggregations.

In consultation with fishing industry representatives, fishery researchers, and stakeholders, and with guidance from the Commission's Marine Resources Committee (MRC), the Department proposes modifications to Title 14, Section 28.30. Proposed language in 28.30, intended to limit take and possession of barred sand bass, includes a range of options for a sub-bag and possession limit for barred sand bass within the overall five-fish combined limit for kelp bass, barred sand bass and spotted sand bass, to be decided through the Commission public noticing process. The options are a range of bag and possession limits of 0-5 barred sand bass, varying seasonally, with a sunset provision ending June 1, 2028. This sunset provision allows for conservation of barred sand bass while the Department works with stakeholders on further reviewing data and developing models to evaluate potential future regulations that will help increase and sustain the barred sand bass population and support public fishing opportunities. The proposed regulation amendment is intended to reduce the overall number of barred sand bass taken by the fishery, specifically during the spawning months when barred sand bass are most vulnerable to fishing.

The proposed changes are as follows:

Subsection 28.30(b) is proposed to be amended to specify bag limit changes to one species, barred sand bass, within the salt water basses complex. This amendment is necessary to further protect barred sand bass spawning aggregations.

Add subsection (c)(1) which would create a limit within the spawning season on barred sand bass (June 1 through August 31) and (c)(2) which would create a limit during all other months. The square brackets indicate a range within which a final number will be determined by the Commission. Add

subsection (d) which would provide for a sunset provision for subsection (c), repealing it as of June 1, 2028.

The subsections would read as follows:

(c) Barred Sand Bass Limit: Notwithstanding subsection (b):

(1) From June 1-August 31 a maximum of [0-5] barred sand bass may be taken or possessed.

(2) From September 1-May 31 a maximum of [1-5] barred sand bass may be taken or possessed.

(d) Sunset Provision: Subsection (c) shall remain in effect until June 1, 2028, and as of that date is repealed.

Benefit of the Regulations:

The Commission anticipates benefits to the State's environment by sustainably managing California's ocean resources. The barred sand bass population would benefit from reduced fishing effort during their spawning season when they are most susceptible to fishing, which ultimately supports a more sustainable fishery in the long term. The adoption of scientifically based limits provides for the maintenance of sufficient populations of barred sand bass to ensure their continued existence for the environment and for the businesses that rely on recreational barred sand bass fishing.

Consistency and Compatibility with Existing Regulations:

Article IV, Section 20 of the State Constitution specifies that the Legislature may delegate to the Commission such powers related to the protection and propagation of fish and game as the Legislature sees fit. The Legislature has delegated authority to the Commission to promulgate recreational fishing regulations (Fish and Game Code sections 200 and 205). Commission staff has searched the California Code of Regulations and has found no other state regulations that address the recreational take of barred sand bass. The Commission has reviewed its own regulations and finds that the proposed regulations are consistent with other recreational fishing regulations in Title 14, CCR, and therefore finds that the proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulation.

Public Participation

Comments Submitted by Mail or Email

It is requested, but not required, that written comments be submitted on or before **5:00 P.M. on Thursday, April 3, 2025** at the address given below, or by email to FGC@fgc.ca.gov. Written comments mailed, or emailed to the Commission office, must be received before 12:00 noon on **Friday, April 10, 2025**. 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, PO Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090.

Meetings

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 California Natural Resources Headquarters Building, Second Floor, 715 P Street Sacramento, California, which will commence at **8:30 a.m.** on **Wednesday, February 12, 2025** and may continue at **8:00 a.m.** on **Thursday, February 13, 2025**. This meeting will also include the opportunity to participate via webinar/teleconference. Instructions for participation in the webinar/teleconference hearing will be posted at www.fgc.ca.gov in advance of the meeting or may be obtained by calling 916-653-4899. Please refer to the Commission meeting agenda, which will be available at least 10 days prior to the meeting, for the most current information.

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 Sacramento, California, which will commence at **8:30 a.m.** on **Wednesday, April 16, 2025** and may continue at **8:30 a.m.**, on **Thursday, April 17, 2025**. The exact location of this meeting has not yet been determined. As soon as this information is available but not less than ten days before the hearing, a continuation notice will be sent to interested and affected parties providing the exact location. The continuation notice will also be published on the Commission's website. This meeting will also include the opportunity to participate via webinar/teleconference. Instructions for participation in the webinar/teleconference hearing will be posted at www.fgc.ca.gov in advance of the meeting or may be obtained by calling 916-653-4899. Please refer to the Commission meeting agenda, which will be available at least 10 days prior to the meeting, for the most current information.

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, Executive Director, Fish and Game Commission, 715 P 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 Melissa Miller-Henson or David Haug at FGC@fgc.ca.gov or at the preceding address or phone number. **Armand Barilotti, Environmental Scientist, Department of Fish and Wildlife, armand.barilotti@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 Business, 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 Commission anticipates that the impact of the proposed regulations on the entirety of marine sport fishing activity is not expected to be sufficient to significantly impact sport fishing expenditures to businesses within the state.

(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 significant impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs, the creation of new businesses, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California. Sport fish-related businesses may have to adjust to changes in the composition of recreational fishing opportunities, but these changes are not expected to be substantial due to the fishery being kept open and from the sufficient substitutability of kelp bass as an alternative species.

The Commission anticipates benefits of the regulation to the health and welfare of California residents. Providing sustainable fishing opportunities encourages recreation, which can have a positive impact on the health and welfare of California residents.

The Commission does not anticipate benefits to worker safety from the proposed regulations.

The Commission anticipates benefits of the regulation to state's environment including preserving fishing opportunity, along with the continuation of the reasonable and sustainable management of barred sand bass resources.

(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:

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.

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

Melissa Miller-Henson
Executive Director

Dated: January 7, 2025