

Staff Summary for August 13-14, 2025

13. Recreational Take of Striped Bass**Today's Item****Information** ☒**Action** ☐

Discuss proposed amendments to regulations regarding recreational striped bass harvest size limits.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| • Granted petition 2020-005 AM 1 | December 2020 |
| • Granted petition 2022-12 | December 2022 |
| • Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) vetting | Various 2023-2024; WRC |
| • Notice hearing | June 11-12, 2025 |
| • Today's discussion hearing | August 13-14, 2025 |
| • Adoption hearing | October 8-9, 2025 |

Background

At its June 2025 meeting, the Commission authorized publication of its intent to amend regulations related to recreational striped bass harvest size limits. The notice appeared in the California Regulatory Notice Record on August 1, 2025. The proposal – initiated by two different public petitions for regulation change granted for consideration by the Commission in 2020 and 2022 – is to complement the existing 18-inch minimum size limit with a 30-inch maximum size limit, effectively creating a slot limit of 18 to 30 inches for harvesting striped bass in anadromous waters and marine waters north of Point Conception. Further background on the proposal noticed by the Commission can be found in Exhibit 1 and the initial statement of reasons (Exhibit 2).

As part of the ongoing discussions about striped bass and a potential slot limit during WRC meetings in 2023 and 2024, the Department provided the Commission an evaluation of the proposal; the evaluation included a set of appendices with a literature review on striped bass diet, foraging behavior and predation, among other data and information. The Department is updating the evaluation with additional information, though it is not expected to change the original conclusions.

Update

Today's meeting is an opportunity for public discussion of the proposed regulation changes.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

A draft negative declaration has been prepared and will be submitted to the State Clearinghouse, along with a notice of completion, consistent with CEQA and Section 15205(e), Title 14. The State Clearinghouse will make the documents available at [CEQAnet](https://ceqa.net).

Significant Public Comments

1. A commenter supports the proposal and advocates for a slot limit of 20-30 inches. (Exhibit 4)

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2. Coalition for a Sustainable Delta supports the proposal, as long as the Commission receives federal approval of the changes under the federal Endangered Species Act and determines that the changes are consistent with the Commission's *Delta Fisheries Management Policy* and *Striped Bass Policy*. (Exhibit 5)
3. The California Delta Protection Commission supports the proposed slot limit, supporting efforts to both maintain a self-sustaining striped bass population for a robust recreational fishery and the overall mission of conservation and protection of listed species. (Exhibit 6)
4. I commenters oppose the proposal for multiple reasons, including, but not limited to, effects on native fish populations, ongoing water management issues, and lack of data to indicate striped bass population declines. (Exhibit 7)

Recommendation (N/A)**Exhibits**

1. [Staff summary for Agenda Item 25, June 2025 Commission meeting \(for background purposes only\)](#)
2. [Initial statement of reasons](#)
3. [Noticed regulatory language](#)
4. [Email from Peter C, received July 30, 2025](#)
5. [Email from Coalition for a Sustainable Delta, received July 31, 2025](#)
6. [Email from Delta Protection Commission, received July 31, 2025](#)
7. [Emails from Matt Bond, Director, Allwaters Protection and Access Coalition, and four individuals opposed to the proposal, received July 30-31, 2025](#)

Motion (N/A)

**Staff Summary for June 11-12, 2025
For Background Purposes Only**

25. Striped Bass

Today's Item

Information ☐

Action ☒

Consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend regulations regarding recreational striped bass harvest size limits.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Granted petition 2020-005 AM 1 in concept | December 9-10, 2020 |
| • Granted petition 2022-12 | December 14-15, 2022 |
| • Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) vetting | Various 2023 - 2024; WRC |
| • Today's notice hearing | June 11-12, 2025 |
| • Discussion hearing | August 13-14, 2025 |
| • Adoption hearing | October 8-9, 2025 |

Background

At its December 2020 meeting, the Commission granted petition 2020-005 AM 1 to potentially establish an inland waters slot limit for the harvest of striped bass. At its December 2022 meeting, the Commission granted a similar petition to establish a slot limit for the harvest of striped bass in marine waters, consistent with the inland slot limit request. The Department evaluated both petitions and presented its findings to WRC over the course of several meetings in 2023 and 2024 (see Exhibit 8). At its September 2024 meeting, WRC recommended that the Commission support a future rulemaking regarding striped bass slot limits from 18 to 30 inches (exhibits 1 and 2).

Consistent with the WRC recommendation, the Department requests that the Commission authorize a notice for proposed amendments to the striped bass regulations; the Department transmitted draft regulatory documents. The draft initial statement of reasons (ISOR; Exhibit 4) includes a detailed breakdown of the history of the striped bass fishery in California, the Department's public outreach efforts regarding striped bass regulations, its evaluation of the petitions for regulation change, and the rationale for its striped bass slot limit recommendation.

Existing regulations already establish – with a few exceptions – an 18-inch minimum size for harvest of striped bass in both inland and marine environments, as well as a bag and possession limit of two fish.

Draft Proposed Regulations

The draft proposed regulations, as detailed in exhibits 4 and 5, would amend sections 5.75 and 27.85 to add a maximum harvest size for striped bass of 30 inches, effectively creating a slot limit of 18 to 30 inches for the harvest of striped bass in both inland and marine environments. Striped bass regulations in non-anadromous waters, however, would not change. The recommendation aims to benefit both fishers and striped bass populations by creating a more robust trophy fishery, reducing recruitment overfishing, and allowing increased spawning by

**Staff Summary for June 11-12, 2025
For Background Purposes Only**

larger mature fish. The proposal also makes minor clarifying amendments to striped bass regulations.

Overall, the proposal is to amend striped bass regulations to:

- Add a maximum harvest size limit of 30 inches for striped bass in both inland and marine waters;
- add a reference to the definition of anadromous waters in inland striped bass regulations;
- replace all references to a “minimum size limit” with a “harvest size limit;” and
- add language specifying that striped bass regulations in non-anadromous waters will remain at an 18-inch harvest size minimum and a bag and possession limit of two fish

Today the Department will present an overview of the draft proposed regulations (Exhibit 7).

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation

Commission staff: Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend regulations related to striped bass slot limits, as recommended by the Department and WRC.

Committee: Support the Department request for regulation amendments related to striped bass slot limits.

Department: Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend regulations as detailed in the draft ISOR and draft proposed regulatory language.

Exhibits

1. Staff Summary for Agenda Item 2, September 12, 2024 WRC meeting (*for background purposes only*)
2. Department presentation from September 12, 2024 WRC
3. Department memo transmitting draft ISOR, received May 16, 2025
4. Draft ISOR
5. Draft proposed regulatory language
6. Draft economic and fiscal impact statement
7. Department presentation
8. *California Department of Fish and Wildlife Evaluation of Regulation Change Petition 2022-12: Proposed 20–30–Inch Harvest Slot Limit for Striped Bass (Morone saxatilis)*, received August 29, 2024

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission authorizes publication of a notice of its intent to amend sections 5.85 and 27.85 related to slot limits for harvesting striped bass.

State of California
Fish and Game Commission
Initial Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action

Amend Sections 5.75(c) and (d), and 27.85(c)
Title 14, California Code of Regulations
Re: Striped Bass Harvest Size Limits

I. Date of Initial Statement of Reasons: March 27, 2025

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing

Date: June 11, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

(b) Discussion Hearing

Date: August 13, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

(c) Adoption Hearing

Date: October 8, 2025

Location: Sacramento area

III. Description of Regulatory Action

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

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR). “Commission” refers to the California Fish and Game Commission unless otherwise specified. “Department” or CDFW refers to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife unless otherwise specified.

The Department sets management actions and regulations for the striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) fishery in California. Currently, any striped bass 18 inches or greater may be harvested within anadromous and marine waters north of Point Conception with a daily bag limit of two fish. The proposed regulation change would impose a “slot limit” within these waters whereby only striped bass from 18 to 30 inches total length would be available for harvest in the sport fishery, with no proposed change to the bag limit or season. A slot limit is a management tool that is designed to allow fish within the size range “slot” to be legally harvested while protecting fish outside that slot.

Striped bass are native to the East and Gulf Coasts of North America and were introduced to San Francisco Bay in 1879. A commercial fishery was established in the San Francisco Bay area by the late 1880s (Scofield 1930). To protect the increasingly popular sport fishery, the commercial striped bass fishery closed in 1935. Prior to 1956, fishing regulations generally included a 12-inch minimum length limit (MLL) and a five fish daily bag limit. From 1956–1981 the MLL increased to 16 inches with a daily bag limit reduction to three fish (Stevens and Kohlhorst 2001). In response to declines in legal-size striped bass in the 1970’s (Kohlhorst 1999) and at the request of anglers, the California legislature established a Striped Bass Management Plan in 1981, which included stocking striped bass in California rivers using private and state-run hatcheries. In the same year,

striped bass regulations were further restricted to an 18-inch MLL and a daily bag limit of two fish (Title 14 CCR 5.75, Title 14 CCR 27.85), which remain in effect today.

The Striped Bass Management Plan was terminated in 2004 due to observed increases in the striped bass population and growing concern over the impact of striped bass predation on native fish species (SB 692, 2003). In 2020, the Commission unanimously adopted an amendment to the striped bass policy that eliminated a numeric target for population size and replaced it with a broader commitment to sustain striped bass populations in support of a robust and self-sustaining recreational fishery (Commission, 2020).

The Nor-Cal Guides and Sportsmen's Association (NCGASA) submitted a regulation change proposal to the Commission on August 1, 2022 (Tracking number [TN] 2022-12). The proposal was to change the MLL from 18 inches to 20 inches and impose a maximum size of 30 inches. The stated goals were:

- To protect the species by increasing the minimum length to allow more fish to mature and successfully spawn prior to harvest, and
- To protect the larger fish that tend to be the most prolific spawners and are becoming increasingly rare in the fishery

At its December 2022 meeting, the Commission granted the petition, 2022-12, for consideration in a future rulemaking, along with previously-granted Petition 2020-005 requesting a freshwater striped bass slot limit. The Commission directed staff to align specific proposed regulations with those developed for Petition 2020-005. Initial discussions took place at the January 2023 Wildlife Resources Committee meeting.

The Department examined the necessity of the proposed changes and developed a report, *California Department of Fish and Wildlife Evaluation of Nor-Cal Guides and Sportsmen's Association (NCGASA) Proposed 20-30 Inch Harvest Slot Limit (HSL) for Striped Bass*. On September 12, 2024, the Department provided the Wildlife Resources Committee with a presentation of the report's findings. The Department recommendation is as follows:

"The Department does not recommend a 20-30-inch Harvest Slot Limit (HSL) as proposed in the petition. The Department recommends maintaining the current 18-inch MLL regulation and is supportive of establishing an upper HSL. Modeling suggests a 30-inch upper limit could result in decreased risk of recruitment overfishing (and thus stock conservation benefits) and increased catch and trophy fishing opportunity, but it cannot confirm if 30 inches is the most appropriate size due to the narrow scope of the current analysis. While there is public support for maintaining the 18-inch MLL (71% of respondents) and establishing a catch-and-release trophy fishery (64% of respondents), the highest percentage of respondents supported no change in harvest regulations (54% of respondents) in the Striped Bass Angler Preference Questionnaire. Creel data suggest that the Striped Bass fishery in California is currently stable, and the current regulations are not contributing to perceived population declines; however, modeling results suggest that the current 18-inch MLL on its own may not be adequate for long-term population stability and growth."

At the September 12, 2024, Commission's Wildlife Resources Committee meeting, the Department presented its support of an 18-30-inch HSL rather than a 20-30 inch HSL. The data show it would benefit anglers by creating a trophy fishery and increasing total catch. Additionally,

modeling indicates it would decrease risk of recruitment overfishing, and increase egg contribution from older fish to total fecundity.

The Department does not support increasing the MLL from 18-20 inches because it would likely not produce the biological or fisheries responses described in the petition. The Department has determined that increasing the current MLL from 18- 20 inches fails to provide sufficient protections to sexually mature female striped bass and would not provide the fisheries response sought. The potential for increased population fecundity contributed by mature females between 18 and 20 inches is negligible based on the percentage of female maturity in that size and age range. Additionally, increasing the MLL to 20 inches is not supported by the angling public contacted through an electronic questionnaire distributed by the Department (n = 18,751). The Striped Bass Angler Preference Questionnaire indicated that 71% supported the current 18-inch MLL. The Department is proposing changes to the following regulations in Title 14, CCR:

- Amend Section 5.75 Striped Bass, subsection (c)
 - Add the maximum harvest size limit of 30 inches.
 - Add reference to the section defining anadromous waters.
 - Amend text to replace references of “minimum size limit” to “harvest size limit”.
 - These changes are necessary to address the petition’s request to provide a 30-inch upper limit which could result in decreased risk of recruitment overfishing (and thus stock conservation benefits) and increased catch and trophy fishing opportunity.
- Add Section 5.75 Striped Bass, subsection (d)(2)
 - Add subsection that specifies that in non-anadromous waters not mentioned in 5.75(d)(1), a minimum size of 18 inches total length and a harvest bag limit of 2 applies.
 - This change is necessary to clarify that the proposed regulation change only applies to anadromous waters and that non-anadromous water regulations for striped bass will not change.
- Amend Section 27.85 Striped Bass, subsection (c)
 - Add the maximum harvest size limit of 30 inches.
 - Amend text to replace references of “minimum size limit” to “harvest size limit”.
 - This change is necessary to address the petition’s request to provide a 30-inch upper limit which could result in decreased risk of recruitment overfishing (and thus stock conservation benefits) and increased catch and trophy fishing opportunity.

(b) Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

As stated in Fish and Game Code Section 1700, Conservation of Aquatic Resources, it is the policy of this state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of the living resources of the ocean and other waters under the jurisdiction and influence of the state for the

benefit of all the citizens of the state and to promote the development of local fisheries and distant water fisheries based in California in harmony with international law, respecting fishing and the conservation of the living resources of the ocean and other waters under the jurisdiction and influence of the state. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, the maintenance of sufficient populations of all species of aquatic organisms to ensure their continued existence, and the maintenance of a sufficient resource to support a reasonable sport use. Adoption of scientifically based harvest size limits, and bag and possession limits provide for the maintenance of sufficient sport fish populations to ensure their continued existence.

The benefits of the proposed regulations are consistent with the sustainable management of California's sport fisheries, general health and welfare of California residents, and promotion of businesses that rely on sport fishing throughout California.

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

Authority: Section(s) 200, 205, 265, 270, and 275, Fish and Game Code

Reference: Section(s) 110, 200, 205 and 265, Fish and Game Code

(d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change

None.

(e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change

Commission Petition 2020-005: Striped Bass Slot Limit

Commission Petition 2022-12: Striped Bass Slot Limit (inland & marine)

California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2024. Evaluation of Regulation Change Petition 2022-12: Proposed 20 – 30-inch harvest slot limit for Striped Bass (*Marone saxatalis*).

California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2024. Evaluation of Nor-Cal Guides and Sportsmen's Association (NCGASA) Proposed 20 – 30-inch harvest slot limit for Striped Bass (Appendices) (*Marone saxatalis*).

Kohlhorst, D. W. 1999. Status of striped bass in the Sacramento–San Joaquin Estuary. California Fish and Game 85(1):31–36.

Scofield, E.C. 1930. The Striped Bass of California (*Roccus lineatus*). Division of Fish and Game of California Fish Bulletin No. 29. 84 pp.

Stevens, D.E. and D.W. Kohlhorst. 2001. California's Marine Living Resources: A Status Report. California Department of Fish and Game. pp 460–464. Available at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Status/2001#28129681-frontmatter-introduction-background>.

(f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication

The rulemaking was proposed by stakeholders at the public Striped Bass Town Hall meeting on August 24, 2022. CDFW also sent out an Angler Preference Survey to ~1 million anglers in summer-fall 2022.

Proposed regulations were discussed at the January 11, 2023, September 12, 2024 and January 15, 2025 Fish and Game Commissions Wildlife Resources Committee meetings.

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

The petitioners requested the implementation of a 20-30 inch harvest slot limit. In its evaluation, the Department found that this slot limit would reduce recreational fishing opportunities while not producing sufficiently improved biological or fisheries responses beyond the proposed 18-30 inch harvest slot limit recommendation. Upon consultation, NCGASA endorsed the 18-30 inch harvest slot limit. No other alternative regulation was identified by or brought forward to the Department that would result in the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative

The no change alternative would leave the current regulations in place.

(c) Description of Reasonable Alternatives that Would Lessen Adverse Impact on Small Business

None.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action

The proposed regulatory action will have no significant adverse effect on the environment, and 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 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 Commission does not anticipate any statewide adverse economic impacts that would directly affect businesses within the state or would affect their ability to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed changes provide clarification of existing regulations regarding the size limits for taking striped bass that are necessary for the continued preservation of the resource without changing fishing opportunities via changes to take limits and thus, the prevention of adverse economic impacts.

(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 is not aware of any impacts from the proposed action that would affect the creation or elimination of jobs, creation or elimination of existing businesses, the expansion of businesses doing business within California, or any benefits to the health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety. The proposed action is not anticipated to change the

level of fishing activity enough to affect the demand for goods and services related to striped bass sportfishing enough to impact the demand for labor, nor induce the creation of new businesses, nor eliminate or induce the expansion of businesses in California. The adoption of scientifically based harvest size limits and bag and possession limits provide for the maintenance of sufficient sport fish populations to ensure their continued existence. The Commission believes Californians will benefit generally from stable populations of striped bass in California's waters and the associated recreational outdoor opportunities and responsible management of environmental resources.

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

The Commission is not aware of any private sector cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action. The proposed changes do not change any fees or create new penalties to be fined and are not anticipated to change the level of fishing activity enough to affect the demand for goods and services related to the recreational sport fishing industry.

(d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State

The Commission does not anticipate any costs or savings to state agencies as a result of the proposed regulations, nor does it anticipate costs or savings in Federal Funding to the State.

(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.

VII. Economic Impact Assessment

(a) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State

The Commission is not aware of any impacts from the proposed action that would affect the creation or elimination of jobs within the state, as the proposed action is not anticipated to change the level of fishing activity enough to affect the demand for goods and services related to striped bass sportfishing enough to impact the demand for labor.

(b) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses Within the State

The Commission is not aware of any impacts from the proposed action that would affect the creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses, as they are not

anticipated to change the level of fishing activity enough to affect the demand for goods and services related to striped bass sportfishing in a way that would induce the creation of new businesses or eliminate any existing businesses in California.

(c) Effects of the Regulation on the Expansion of Businesses Currently Doing Business Within the State

The Commission is not aware of any impacts from the proposed action that would affect the expansion of businesses doing business within California, as they are not anticipated to change the level of fishing activity enough to affect the demand for goods and services related to striped bass sportfishing enough to induce the expansion of businesses currently doing business within California.

(d) Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

None.

(e) Benefits of the Regulation to Worker Safety

None.

(f) Benefits of the Regulation to the State's Environment

The adoption of scientifically based harvest size limits and bag and possession limits provide for the maintenance of sufficient sport fish populations to ensure their continued existence.

(g) Other Benefits of the Regulation

None.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Currently, any striped bass 18 inches or greater may be harvested within anadromous and marine waters north of Point Conception with a daily bag limit of two fish. The proposed regulation change would impose a slot limit within these waters whereby only striped bass from 18 to 30 inches total length would be available for harvest in the sport fishery, with no proposed change to the bag limit or season.

Striped bass are native to the East and Gulf Coasts of North America, and were introduced to San Francisco Bay in 1879. A commercial fishery was established in the San Francisco Bay area by the late 1880s but closed in 1935. Prior to 1956, fishing regulations generally included a 12-inch minimum length limit (MLL) and a five fish daily bag limit. From 1956–1981 the MLL increased to 16 inches with a daily bag limit reduction to three fish. In response to declines in legal-size striped bass in the 1970's and at the request of anglers, the California legislature established a Striped Bass Management program in 1981, which included stocking striped bass in California rivers using private and state-run hatcheries. In the same year, striped bass regulations were further restricted to an 18-inch MLL and a daily bag limit of two fish, which remain in effect today. The Striped Bass Management Plan was ended in 2004 due to increases in the striped bass population and concern over the impact of striped bass predation on native fish species. In 2020, the Fish and Game Commission committed to sustain striped bass populations in support of a recreational fishery.

The Nor-Cal Guides and Sportsmen's Association (NCGASA) submitted a regulation change proposal to the Fish and Game Commission on August 1, 2022 (Tracking number [TN] 2022–12). The proposal was to change the MLL from 18 inches to 20 inches and impose a maximum size of 30 inches. The stated goals were:

- To protect the species by increasing the minimum length to allow more fish to mature and successfully spawn prior to harvest and
- To protect the larger fish that tend to be the best spawners and are becoming increasingly rare in the fishery

The Department developed a report, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Evaluation of Nor-Cal Guides and Sportsmen's Association (NCGASA) Proposed 20-30 Inch Harvest Slot Limit (HSL) for Striped Bass. On September 12, 2024, the Department provided the Wildlife Resources Committee with a presentation of the report's findings. The Department supported an 18-30-inch HSL because it would benefit anglers by creating a trophy fishery and increasing total catch.

The Department is proposing changes to the following regulations in Title 14, CCR:

- Amend Section 5.85 Striped Bass, subsection (c)
 - Add the maximum harvest size limit of 30 inches.
 - Add reference to the section defining anadromous waters.
 - Amend text to replace references to "minimum size limit" with "harvest size limit".
- Add Section 5.85 Striped Bass, subsection (d)(2)
 - Add section that specifies that in non anadromous waters not mentioned in 5.75(d)(1), a minimum size of 18 inches total length and a harvest bag limit of 2 applies.
- Amend Section 27.85 Striped Bass, subsection (c)

- Add the maximum harvest size limit of 30 inches.

Amend text to replace references to “minimum size limit” with “harvest size limit”.

Benefits of the Regulations:

As stated in Fish and Game Code Section 1700, Conservation of Aquatic Resources, it is the policy of this state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of the living resources of the ocean and other waters under the jurisdiction and influence of the state for the benefit of all the citizens of the state and to promote the development of local fisheries and distant water fisheries based in California in harmony with international law, respecting fishing and the conservation of the living resources of the ocean and other waters under the jurisdiction and influence of the state. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, the maintenance of sufficient populations of all species of aquatic organisms to ensure their continued existence, and the maintenance of a sufficient resource to support a reasonable sport use. Adoption of scientifically based harvest size limits, and bag and possession limits provide for the maintenance of sufficient sport fish populations to ensure their continued existence.

The benefits of the proposed regulations are consistent with the sustainable management of California’s sport fisheries, general health and welfare of California residents, and promotion of businesses that rely on sport fishing throughout California.

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 striped 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.

Proposed Regulatory Language

Subsection (c) and (d) of Section 5.75, Title 14, CCR, is amended to read:

§ 5.75. Striped Bass.

(a) Open season: All year except for closures listed in special regulations.

(b) Limit: Two, except in waters listed in (d) below.

(c) ~~Minimum-Harvest size limit: No fish less than 18 inches or greater than 30 inches total length may be taken or possessed in anadromous waters as defined in Section 1.04, Title 14, CCR, and inland waters as defined in Section 1.53, Title 14, CCR except in waters listed in (d) below.~~

(d) Exceptions:

(1) In the Colorado River District, the Southern District, and New Hogan, San Antonio and Santa Margarita lakes.

(A) Limit: Ten.

(B) Minimum size: No size limit.

(2) All other non-anadromous waters, lakes and/or reservoirs not mentioned in Section 5.75(d)(1)

(A) Limit: Two

(B) Minimum size: 18 inches total length

(e) For the purpose of these regulations, any striped bass hybrid with white bass is considered to be striped bass.

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 200, 205, 265 and 270, Fish and Game Code.

Reference: Sections 110, 200, 205 and 265, Fish and Game Code.

Subsection (c) of Section 27.85, Title 14, CCR, is amended to read:

§ 27.85. Striped Bass.

(a) Open season: All year.

(b) Limit: Two.

(c) ~~Minimum~~ Harvest size limits:

(1) North of Pt. Conception, ~~18 inches total length.~~ no fish less than 18 inches total length or greater than 30 inches total length may be taken or possessed.

(2) South of Pt. Conception, no ~~minimum~~ harvest-size limit.

(d) Methods of take: No striped bass may be taken while using a sinker weighing over four pounds, or while using any power driven gurdy or winch. Striped bass may only be taken by angling as defined in Section 1.05, Title 14, CCR, spearfishing pursuant to Section 1.76, and bow and arrow fishing tackle; snagging is an illegal method of take.

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 200, 205, 265 and 275, Fish and Game Code.

Reference: Sections 110, 200 and 205, Fish and Game Code.

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

From Peter C. [REDACTED]
Date Wed 07/30/2025 04:50 PM
To FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

Hi FGC,

This is an amazing change. Thank you for protecting the water ways and fishery for striped bass recreation. 20-30in slot limit is the best I've heard so far.

There will be a lot folks against it but I've spent a lot of time fishing the delta to the sf bay for striped bass. The fishery isn't the same as it once was for them. So, this is a muchly needed change to protect the fishery for future generations.

Appreciate all you folks do to enforce regulations and poachers etc.

Thank you!

Petition Tracking Number 2022-12

From Maddie Munson [REDACTED]

Date Thu 07/31/2025 04:08 PM

To FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

Cc Paul S. Weiland [REDACTED] Brad Samuelson [REDACTED]
Imartin [REDACTED] J. Scott Petersen (SLDMWA) [REDACTED] Gail
Delihant [REDACTED] Richard Filgas [REDACTED] stephen [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] aalfaro [REDACTED] JPierre [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] cwallace [REDACTED]

Please see the attached comment letter for Petition Tracking Number 2022-12.

Maddie Munson
Coalition for a Sustainable Delta



VIA EMAIL ONLY

July 31, 2025

Ms. Erika Zavaleta President
California Fish and Game Commission
715 P Street, 16th Floor
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

**Re: Petition to the California Fish and Game Commission for a
Regulation Change Regarding the Striped Bass Slot Limit
(Petition Tracking Number 2022-12)**

Dear President Zavaleta,

We are writing on behalf of a coalition of water agencies and farming associations (“water and farming coalition”) with respect to Petition 2022-12 (“Striped Bass Petition” or “Petition”). The water and farming coalition represents urban and rural water agencies statewide and the Central Valley’s farming community. Members of the water and farming coalition have raised concerns about striped bass predation on listed fish in the Bay-Delta region over a decades-long period. This is the case because the water and farming communities invest hundreds of millions of dollars each year in efforts to protect native, listed fish species, and predation by non-native striped bass harms those same species we seek to protect.

At the same time, the water and farming coalition recognizes that striped bass is a popular sport fish. Sport fishing professionals and enthusiasts share many of the same rural communities that are home to California farm families. Our members are similarly focused on supporting rural economies while carefully preserving our natural resources. Therefore, the water and farming coalition supports the establishment and maintenance of sustainable recreational fisheries in the Bay-Delta region and across California where such fisheries comply with federal and state law and Commission policies.

While members of the water and farming coalition have historically opposed any change to the striped bass sport fishing regulations intended to increase the striped

bass population in the Bay-Delta region, we are prepared to drop our prior objections to the proposed regulatory changes provided the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) and Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) obtain federal approval of the changes under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Commission determines the changes are consistent with its *Delta Fisheries Management Policy* and *Striped Bass Policy*.

Members of the water and farming coalition actively participated in open stakeholder meetings facilitated by Department and Commission staff that ultimately led the Commission to unanimously adopt the *Delta Fisheries Management Policy* (adopted Feb. 21, 2020). Among other things, that Policy states “the Department shall manage Delta fisheries in a manner that provides for maximizing sustainable recreational angling opportunities while avoiding or minimizing adverse effects to native and listed species, species of greatest conservation need, and recovery activities.” The Policy reflects the Commission’s recognition that listed species have highest priority, and also the importance of providing recreational angling opportunities. The Policy provides the Commission with a roadmap to balance competing priorities in the context of Delta fisheries management, but it gives the Commission some latitude to determine how to respond to the Petition.

It is appropriate for the Commission to seek to protect and expand recreational angling opportunities where it can do so consistent with the other priorities articulated in the Policy and also with federal and state law. Over the last several months, the Commission has considered how to balance these various priorities in the context of the recreational white sturgeon fishery. Published research suggests that the Commission’s prior white sturgeon sport fishing regulations (including a 40-60 inch slot limit) led to over-exploitation of the population (Blackburn et al. 2019). Members of the water and farming coalition supported – and continue to support – the modified white sturgeon sport fishing regulations (including a 42-48 inch slot limit) the angling community has requested and that Commission was poised to adopt before receiving the petition to list white sturgeon. While we understand the Commission is likely to adopt regulations authorizing a catch-and-release fishery only, we do not believe that the best available scientific information dictates this outcome. Our preference would be to see the Commission authorize a limited recreational fishery with a substantially reduced exploitation rate.

With respect to striped bass, we are likewise open to balancing that provides for sustainable recreational angling opportunities while limiting the extent to which striped bass predation reduces the populations of native, listed fish. Such balancing may involve efforts to minimize and mitigate the take of native, listed fish. But any change to the existing regulation intended to increase the striped bass population can only occur in consultation with the federal fisheries agencies consistent with the federal ESA.

The federal ESA (like its state counterpart) prohibits take of listed species, such as delta smelt and Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon. The exercise of regulatory authority by state or local governments can subject those entities to liability for unauthorized take of listed species. See, e.g., *Strahan v. Cox*, 127 F.3d 155 (1st

Cir. 1997); *see also Nat'l Audubon Soc'y, Inc. v. Davis*, 307 F.3d 835 (9th Cir. 2002). Here, (i) the express purpose of the regulatory changes is to increase the striped bass population, (ii) there is uncontroverted evidence that striped bass prey on listed species, and (iii) there can be no question that an increase in the striped bass population will increase the likelihood and magnitude of striped bass predation on listed species. To be clear, all we are asking is that the Commission and Department comply with Commission policy as well as the same federal requirements that all other federal and non-federal entities, including its sister agency the California Department of Water Resources, must fulfill.

Compliance with the federal ESA is consistent with the *Delta Fisheries Management Policy* and *Striped Bass Policy* as it will ensure that the regulatory change is implemented in a manner that avoids or minimizes adverse effects of the regulatory change on listed species. The water and farming coalition is committed to continue to seek opportunities to work with the angling community, this Commission, and the Department to protect and promote sustainable recreational and commercial fisheries while at the same time seeking to conserve listed species and protecting and promoting sustainable ground water and surface water supplies necessary to support communities and farmers across the state. We appreciate your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Coalition for a Sustainable Delta
Association of California Water Agencies
Western Growers
California Farm Bureau Federation
Kern County Water Agency
State Water Contractors
Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water)
San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority
San Luis Water District

DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION

Diane Burgis, Chair (Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors)

2101 Stone Blvd., Suite 200, West Sacramento, CA 95691

(916) 375-4800 | delta.ca.gov



July 31, 2025

California Fish and Game Commission

P.O. Box 944209

Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Attn: President Zavaleta and Commissioners

Sent Via Email: fgc@fgc.ca.gov

Re: Petition 2020-05, Striped Bass Slot Limit

Dear President Zavaleta and Commissioners:

The Delta Protection Commission (Commission) is a state agency charged with ensuring orderly, balanced conservation and development of Delta agriculture, recreation, and natural resources, and improved flood protection. The Commission also serves as a forum for Delta residents and to advise agencies on matters affecting the unique cultural, recreational, and agricultural resources of the Delta. We submit these comments under Public Resource Code Section 29770(d) which authorizes the Commission to comment on projects that impact the Delta's Primary Zone. The Commission considered this letter at its July 17, 2025 meeting and approved it by a 10-0-0 vote.

Earlier this year our advisory committee approached us with a recommendation that we endorse striped bass fishing regulations that include a slot limit in the Delta. The current regulation allows for the take of striped bass 18 inches or larger.

The Department's proposed regulations would add a maximum harvest size for striped bass of 30 inches, effectively creating a slot limit of 18 to 30 inches. The recommendation aims to benefit both anglers and striped bass populations by creating a more robust trophy fishery, reducing overfishing, and allowing increased spawning by larger mature fish. It is believed the maximum size limit would ensure a sustainable striped bass population in the Delta. We support the proposed slot limit.

The Commission supports both efforts to maintain a self-sustaining striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) population for a robust recreational fishery, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife's overall mission of conservation and protection of listed species. It appears that additional study is still needed on stripers predation on listed species. We therefore also ask

that you consider how the California Fish and Game Commission can promote assessment and monitoring of the relationship between striped bass and listed species, including habitat and predation, to ensure a balance in managing game fish and species of conservation need.

With this suggestion, we encourage the Fish and Game Commission to accept the Department of Fish and Wildlife staff's recommended slot limit regulation to establish the slot limit for striped bass.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Diane Burgis
Chair and Supervisor, Contra Costa County

CC: Commissioners, Delta Protection Commission
Ari Cornman, California Fish and Game Commission
Jonathon Nelson, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

8/13&14 2025 Commission Meeting Agenda Item 13; recreational take of striped bass.

From Matthew Bond <[REDACTED]>

Date Thu 07/31/2025 09:27 AM

To FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

Cc Christopher Killen [REDACTED]

July 30, 2025

California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Submitted electronically to fgc@fgc.ca.gov

Re: 8/13&14 2025 Commission Meeting Agenda Item 13;
recreational take of striped bass.

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Matt Bond and I am a Director with Allwaters Protection and Access Coalition. Allwaters exists to advocate for the protection of our precious marine resources as well as to defend fishing access for all Californians.

I am writing to express Allwaters' opposition to the proposed rule change involving the implementation of a slot limit for striped bass.

Simply stated, there does not seem to be conclusive data showing that the striped bass population is in a state of decline due to fishing effort. There has also not been a thorough analysis of the impact of an increased striper population, or more larger striper, on the very diminished salmonid populations.

With regard to current striper biomass, in contrast to what is being reported by the petitioners and by a few Department net surveys, creel surveys by the Department and anecdotal observations by many fishermen point to a very stable and even expanding biomass. I would like to bring particular attention to the accounts of spearfishing participants in the Sacramento, Feather, and American Rivers. They have consistently seen huge numbers of fish for years. And they regularly see and take numerous fish well over the proposed 30" upper slot. The idea that there is a decline in large fish is not supported by what this very active community is experiencing. There are numerous videos of these fish, in situ, available for the Department and Commission to view.

Further, it's a well known fact that our state's fresh water allocation and distribution is problematic at best. It has been hypothesized by some of these aforementioned spearfishers, based on their observations of the movements of the fish up and down the rivers, that during the extreme drought years we had in 2020-2022, that fish stopped following usual migration patterns and instead stayed in the upper river drainages. This would explain why the delta guides as well as Department surveys at set locations showed less fish.

There has been no or limited study of what impacts these invasive fish are having on native ecosystems, particularly with respect to species not important to recreational and commercial fishing. Striped bass are a large, voracious, foreign apex predator. To favor their management without proper consideration of the potential impact to the entire ecosystem is irresponsible.

Lastly, the idea that spearfishing for the species will need to be eliminated as a method of take, as outlined in the Department's presentation at the June 11-12 2025 Commission meeting on this topic, is an unacceptable outcome and disproportionately impacts the harvesters least impactful to the resource. The spearfishing community fought long and hard to have the ability to be able to harvest this invasive species. The department and commission did

good work to insure allowing spearfishing as a method of take was reasonable and sustainable. To simply take that away based on an overly precautionary approach and with limited data is wrong. Disallowing the spearing of striped bass basically eliminates the ability for California spearfishers to harvest a fresh water fish which is good tablefare. If they are gone, all that are left are rough fish.

Like almost every aspect of fisheries management in California, budget plays an outsized role in what the Department is able to do in terms of resource allocation to make informed decisions on this matter. It is our opinion that the potential negatives of a slot limit for striped bass far outweigh the positives. There is not a proven stock decline that would demand this action. Salmon and steelhead, which are in peril, could be negatively impacted by this action. For these reasons we implore the Commission to reject this proposal for a rule change and rather advocate for the allocation of time and resources to native species.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Matt Bond
Allwaters PAC

5.7 Striped Bass - Non Native

From Joshua Mezman [REDACTED]
Date Wed 07/30/2025 10:28 AM
To Wildlife Striped Bass <StripedBass@wildlife.ca.gov>; FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

Hello,

I recently saw that there is a proposed change to the regulations for Striped Bass fishing that I believe are misguided and pushed by a naive agenda from fishing guides. The regulation change seems to only benefit those who are making money from guiding people into fish.

The issue at the heart here is the Salmon population. Striped bass are an invasive species. They do not belong in the California watershed, and provide little added value other than a sport fishery.

Here are some reasons why we should not be protecting striped bass:

1) Low Water = High Predation

No one is solving the water problem any time soon. Striped bass are decimating salmon smolt populations, low water means there is less room to hide.

2) Native Fish

Salmonids are native. Striped Bass are not. We should not be promoting the survival of non native fish. Especially when they are eating a commercially viable fish.

3) Salmon Industry

We should be taking every action possible to prevent the further destruction of California salmon stocks. These are prized fish, the economic impact of protecting this fish far outweighs Striped Bass.

I believe this is a misguided approach to protecting California rivers and native fish.

Regards
Joshua

Striped bass (size limit change)

From lance bain [REDACTED]

Date Wed 07/30/2025 01:46 PM

To FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

I am a concerned commercial and sport salmon fisherman. Nor-Cal Guides and sportsman Association in respect to Striped bass is advocating as special interest group. We went through this before with them after careful study by Fish and Wildlife suggested that the law be changed to no size limit and no bag limit should be put in place to knock down their numbers to protect salmon. (The won that battle). Now they want to make things worse!!!! Thanks Lance

08-13-2025 Agenda item 13. Recreational take of striped bass harvest size limits. (Amend sections 5.75 and 27.85)

From John Lopez [REDACTED]
Date Thu 07/31/2025 10:55 AM
To FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

To: FGC

RE:08-13-2025 Agenda item 13. Recreational take of striped bass harvest size limits. (Amend sections 5.75 and 27.85)

Please keep current regulations in place. Many anglers already do not keep large Striped Bass due to the apex predator's accumulation of toxics. I believe from the fishing reports from the Valley Rivers, San Francisco Bay Area and coastal beaches that there is no significant decline. Also to protect more vulnerable populations of aquatic life such as Coho Salmon, Chinook Salmon, Delta smelt etc. it would make sense to not encourage more of the highly predatory Striped Bass.

Not for discussion here but only to mention the River Systems need more water to support a healthier population of all species including Striped Bass.

I am a 68 years old 3rd generation Californian and lifelong fisherman and remember all the better fishing we used to have here in our great state of California. I have to go to Alaska to see what California's rivers used to be like, supporting thriving and teaming with all species of mammals, birds and fish.

Respectfully,
John Lopez
Marin County

OPPOSITION TO STRIPED BASS LIMIT!!!!

From Paul Young [REDACTED]
Date Thu 07/31/2025 11:03 AM
To FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

July 30, 2025

California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Submitted electronically to <mailto:fgc@fgc.ca.gov>

Re: 8/13&14 2025 Commission Meeting Agenda Item 13; recreational take of striped bass.

Dear President Zavaleta, Vice President Murray, and Commissioners Haussler-Carmeson, Sklar, and Anderson,

My name is Paul Young and I am writing to urge this commission to reject the proposed rule change under consideration to implement a slot limit for striped bass. The entire premise that the fishery is in decline or that larger fish are becoming more scarce is false.

I am an avid rod and reel and spearfisherman. I have spent the better part of three decades closely observing striped bass across their distribution in the United States. I have angled for and speared them on the East Coast, in fresh water in Lake Mead, Lake Powell, and Beaver Lake in Arkansas, and most extensively in the larger rivers in Northern California. I hold the current fresh water spearfishing record for the species at 52 pounds. I have conservatively speared hundreds striped bass in the 25-45 pound range in Northern California Rivers. I have probably caught and released several hundred more with a fishing pole. I've spent countless hours in the cold and murky waters of the Sacramento, American, and Feather Rivers hunting, watching, and filming these beautiful fish. For these reasons, I feel I am better qualified than almost anyone to comment on the status of the fishery.

There are massive, healthy, schools of all sizes of fish in our riparian and marine systems. This includes and abundance of mature fish in excess of 20 pounds (many between 40 and 50 pounds). I have lots of videos showing this.

The observation by members of the guides association that fish were declining when they submitted the petition which resulted in the proposed rule change was most certainly due to the severe three year drought that plagued the state from 2020 to 2023. The fish didn't die off. They simply decided to stay up in the rivers as opposed to running into the delta, bay, and ocean. There was plenty of cool water and forage fish in the upper tracts of the rivers. The fish simply staid put. Because of this shift in behavior, the guides weren't finding them for clients at their usual spots and the DFW biologists weren't catching as many in their nets at their regular survey spots. Those conditions as well as those results don't persist today.

As we are all well aware, these same low water conditions devastated our state's salmon and steelhead populations; these fish don't have the same flexibility in their lifecycle and travel plans as the stripers do.

On the topic of salmon, I have personally witnessed striper in the river gorge on smolt, both planted and native. I've harvested many fish completely stuffed with baby salmon and steelhead. More striper around is potentially bad for the recovery of salmon. One particular period after a steelhead release on the Sacramento River, we had 7 days of fishing where we hooked 25-45 pound fish on every cast for hours until the sun went down. We'd just move down a boat ramp every day. We estimated the striper school to be almost a mile long and as wide as the river. Every 9 inch steelhead released had to have been eaten. I've have video of 40-50lb fish in front of the hatchery. Huge schools of striper patrol the upper river now, in prime trout and salmon spawning areas.

Protecting an invasive species, that arguably doesn't need protection, at the potential detriment of the recovery of a hugely important group of native fishes makes absolutely no sense.

It is for these reasons I implor this Commission to reject the implementation of a slot limit for striped bass and instead do what the majority of respondents to the related angler survey suggest and leave the regulations the same as they are now.

Thank you,

Paul Young
Redding, CA