

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

August 27, 2025

Abbreviated Summary of Inland Sport Fishing Regulation Change Concept Proposals for the 2027 Sport Fish Update

Regulation Language Clean Up:

Note: these changes enhance clarity or fix errors, and do not alter the application or enforcement of regulations.

Section 5.65 (regulations relating to American Shad): Include spearfishing as a method of take allowable in the Valley District. This will make 5.65 consistent with Section 2.30 (relating to spearfishing), which was updated in the 2025 to allow spearfishing as a method of take for American Shad in the Valley District. (Submitted 2024)

Section 5.85(a)(2): Add 7.00 (which lists general regulations in each District) to the list of sections excepted from general statewide trout regulations. This change was requested to clarify confusion among anglers. (Submitted in 2024)

Section 6.34: The definition of "Southern District" in this section relating to trout, salmon, and Special Regulations erroneously copies the Sierra District definition. This change would correct the language to the as-intended definition from the sport fish booklet. (Submitted 2025)

Sections 7.40(b) and 8.00: Reorganize, condense, and clean up the language in the low-flow regulations, standardize the identification of stream gauges, remove streams from 8.00 that lack low-flow criteria. Align 8.00 with 7.40(b) and clarify boundaries in both sets of regulations where descriptions are unclear, and add detailed line references between 8.00 and 7.40(b). (Submitted 2024 and 2025)

- **Necessity:** A new website for low-flow fishing restrictions was launched in early 2025, which brought more attention to the language and content in 8.00. What started as an initiative to remove redundancies and improve stylistic inconsistencies in the regulation turned into a more expansive effort to revamp 8.00 after input from regional staff. These changes will make the regulations easier to understand, thereby reducing angler confusion.

Section 7.50(b)(90) McCloud River and Tributaries: Clean up and reorganize, group streams with similar regulations. This would simplify the regulation, making it easier to understand by grouping waters with similar regulations. (Submitted 2025)

Section 7.50(b)(145): The name of Squaw Valley Creek was changed by federal legislation through the Department of Interior's Order 3404 on 9/8/2022 to Yét Atwam Creek. This update will make the regulation text consistent with this change. (Submitted 2024)

Section 230(g)(2): Minor grammar correction. Section 230(g)(2) has an ungrammatical 's' that should be removed. (submitted 2025)

Changes To Increase Fishing Opportunities

Section 4.20(d): Bait Fish Use in the Sacramento River (Shasta and Tehama Co.): Move the upper limit of the Sacramento River upstream from Highway 32 Bridge to Deschutes Bridge. Allowing live fin fish to be used further up the Sacramento River will increase fishing opportunities on striped bass and other non-native fishes that are currently limited to lures and other methods. (submitted 2024)

Section 5.00(b) (Lassen and Modoc Co.): Remove black bass minimum size requirement from all waters, except for Mountain Meadows Reservoir. Biologists in Region 1 have observed slow growth rates and stunted sizes in black bass in many of the reservoirs, with fish not reaching the 12-inch minimum size. A zero-size minimum would increase harvest of smaller bass and improve the overall size structure of the populations. (Submitted 2024)

Section 7.00(b)(2): (Shasta and Tehama Co.): Increase fishing opportunity by allowing the use of bait during summer months within anadromous streams in Shasta and Tehama Counties (when anadromous fish are not present). (Submitted 2024)

Section 7.40(b)(11) (Battle Creek, Shasta and Tehama Co.): Re-open lower Battle Creek from 1,250 feet below Coleman Fish Hatchery weir to its confluence with the Sacramento River from June 30 to December 31, with the restriction that only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used. This change would provide recreational angling opportunity for native and non-native warmwater fish species and hatchery-origin trout and steelhead. Shore-based steelhead fishing on lower Battle Creek would provide opportunity to much broader angling interest groups. (Submitted 2025)

Section 7.50(b)(47) Fall River Complex (Shasta and Siskiyou Co.): Remove (L) Fall River Pond and (M) Fall River Lake from 7.50(b)(47) Fall River Complex (Shasta and Siskiyou Co.). Fall River Pond and Fall River Lake would default to T14 5.85(a)(1) statewide general trout regulations. These restrictions have been unpopular with anglers and the research suggests they are not effective in protecting the population of Rainbow Trout that was intended to be protected. CalTrout sent a support letter and the Department

is awaiting a support letter from Fall River Conservancy who also requested this change. (Submitted 2025)

- The "Fall River Complex" was added to the freshwater sportfishing regulations in 2021. The angling regulation addition coincided with an expansion of the Fall River wild trout designation. The Department justified the addition and expansion by citing a unique spring population including genetic differences and life histories among rainbow trout within the Fall River system; a research project led by U.C. Davis with assistance from the Department. The regulation was put in place to provide protections for rainbow trout in the Fall River Complex and was the result of litigation by the Fall River Conservancy.
- Fall River Pond and Fall River Lake were not included in the U.C. Davis research and there is limited data to suggest that rainbow trout from the Fall River Complex mix with rainbow trout in Fall River Lake and Fall River Pond.

(47) Fall River Complex (Shasta and Siskiyou Co.).

(A) Fall River (from the confluence with Pit River Pit No. 1 PG&E Diversion Dam upstream to origin at Thousand Springs). (B) Lava Creek (C) Little Tule River (D) Tule River (E) Horr Pond (F) Ja She Creek (G) Big Lake (H) Bear Creek (downstream of Pondosa Way bridge) (I) Spring Creek (J) Ahjumawi Lava Springs (K) Eastman Lake (L) Fall River Pond (M) Fall River Lake	<i>All year. Only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used</i>	<i>0 trout</i>
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Section 7.50(b)(149) Susan River (Lassen Co.) and Section 8.10 Susan River Youth Derby:

Revert fishing regulations to the historic traditional trout opener (Last Saturday in April through Nov. 15). This change will increase angler opportunity by lengthening the season in the spring and shortening the winter season. Update language to include a special open season for youths participating in the Youth Fishing Derby. (Submitted 2024)

Section 8.00: For low-flow closures, allow the ability to make split block decisions instead of solid block decisions. Allowing split block decisions has the potential to add angling days and reduce angler frustration. The current regulations specify the days when Department staff will determine low-flow fishing closures, and fishing on all days

between Department updates shall either be opened or closed (solid block decision). Now with the new website, it is easier to display information, and the Department could opt for more flexibility in determining low-flow fishing closures. Instead of closing or opening fishing for an entire two-to-four-day period, the Department could choose to close or open fishing for only part of the two-to-four-day period (split block decision). Split block decisions will allow the Department to be more flexible and precise in applying closures only to days when flows are predicted to fall below minimum thresholds. (Submitted 2025)

Gear-Related Changes

Section 2.10(b)3 and (b)4 Hook and Weight Restrictions: allow the usage of small lightweight weight directly attached below a hook and expansion of fishable waters with treble hooks on non-buoyant lures. The amendment of both subsections 2.10 b (3 and 4) would clarify angler regulations for the public and wildlife officers. The change to weights being allowed below a hook would not apply to lakes and reservoirs, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, or the Colorado River as outlined in 2.10 (b). The change to the use of treble hooks on non-buoyant lures could have the same geographic boundary, reduced boundary, or be species specific. (Submitted 2025)

Current regulations do not allow the use of weights of any size attached directly below a hook in rivers or streams. The use of treble hooks on non-buoyant lures exceeding one ounce can also not be used in this same geographic area. The original intention of these regulations was to prevent the use of gear rigging that could be used to snag native fishes in their migration pathways or spawning habitat. However, these restrictions minimize angling opportunity by limiting the techniques and species that can be targeted, especially during the time of year when native species are not present. Additionally, small lightweight weights attached below a hook can help sink light terminal tackle in the water column and is used in popular angling techniques legal in other states. Depending on gear rigging, some common lures and techniques do not pose a snagging risk, so should be considered as techniques that California anglers could utilize to target trout, bass, and other species.

In the angling community there is confusion about the legality of techniques and tackle. This confusion stems from the popularity of the techniques that utilize this configuration in other states, similar fisheries occurring here in California, and because the method is permissible in lakes, reservoirs, and the Delta. This change would improve law enforcement's ability to enforce these regulations consistently across the state and reduce their need to intervene as frequently.

Section 7.40 (40) a1-2, Eel River: Change gear restriction boundary line to align with more recognizable features for the boundary, resulting in a slight shift downstream, ~.5 miles. Not thought to be controversial. (Submitted 2024)

Protective Changes

Sections 6.35 and 7.00: To protect experimentally reintroduced Chinook fish, modify the Sierra district boundary in 6.35 to include a small section of Yuba County ("Yuba County east of New Bullards Bar Dam;"). Add two specific sections in 7.00(b), the North Fork Feather River (NFFR) above Chester Diversion Dam, and on the North Yuba River (NYR) above New Bullards Bar Dam, which will be closed to Chinook Salmon fishing all year. This closure does not include New Bullards Bar, just the tributaries. (Submitted 2025)

<i>District/Water</i>	<i>Open Season and Special Restrictions</i>	<i>Daily Bag and Possession Limit</i>
<u>(3) North Fork Feather River and tributaries upstream from Chester Diversion Dam</u>	<u>Closed to take and possession of Chinook Salmon</u>	
<u>(4) North Yuba River and tributaries upstream of New Bullards Bar Dam</u>	<u>Closed to the take and possession of Chinook Salmon</u>	

Section 7.40(b): Add new special regulation sections for (28) Clear Creek, (36) Cow Creek, (25) Cottonwood Creek, and (75) Paynes Creek. Change Antelope Creek boundary to make angling more protective for Central Valley steelhead on this section. Note that this will result in renumbering most of section 7.40. (Submitted 2024)

Section 7.40(b)(9): Arroyo Seco River (Monterey Co.): change the trout bag limit from 5 trout to 5 Brown Trout and 0 Rainbow Trout. Add a gear restriction of "only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used". These measures would protect the native Coastal Rainbow Trout threatened by drought and degraded habitat conditions and as a result, would support steelhead population viability in the Salinas River watershed. (Submitted 2024)

Section 7.50(b)(90): Add Trout Creek into to provide angling regulation protections for McCloud River Redband Trout (MRRT), consistent with other streams in the MRRT Refugium. Trout Creek has been identified as a high priority conservation stream, but not included as a "Core Conservation Stream" in MRRT Conservation Agreement (CA) (2017). Confounding genetic results prior to the completion of the CA was the justification for Trout Creek to be excluded as a core conservation stream. However, since the genetics results, the Department has identified a "95% barrier" where MRRT collected upstream of the barrier were shown to be genetically distinct, and Rainbow Trout collected downstream of the barrier were shown to be slightly introgressed (Rainbow Trout cross with MRRT). Additionally, non-native Brown Trout are found downstream of the barrier but not upstream. The Department is currently working with the private landowner to improve the 95% barrier to ensure introgressed and non-native trout are unable to pass upstream at all flows, thence protecting the genetically distinct population upstream.

In addition to improving the barrier, angling regulation changes are necessary to provide further protection for this population. The proposed angling regulations are consistent with Swamp Creek in the Refugium which provides a stable MRRT population where catch and release recreational angling will have no population level impacts. Trout Creek is currently the focus for other restoration opportunities and the Department is developing plans with the USFS for meadow restoration, cattle exclusion fencing, and methods to remove non-native fish (dewatering) and repopulate with genetically distinct MRRT, reclaiming all of Trout Creek for MRRT as the long-term conservation goal. California Trout submitted a letter in support of this change. (Submitted 2025)

Section 8.00: As part of the low-flow updates, add quantitative low-flow criteria to Pescadero Creek and Aptos and Soquel Creeks that will reduce fishing opportunity on days when flows fall below determined thresholds. These creeks currently lack quantitative low-flow criteria, instead deferring to the Department to determine when flows may impede fish passage. These new low-flow closures will protect steelhead when they are most vulnerable. (Submitted 2025)

Other

Section 1.73 (a) and (b): To accommodate the genetic sampling requirements of Parentage-Based Tagging (PBT) in fisheries surveys, amend biological sample collection requirements for commercial and recreational salmon fisheries to include the additional requirement of all persons fishing for salmon to provide a tissue sample from unmarked (i.e., adipose fin present) salmon upon request by an authorized agent or employee of the Department. (submitted 2025)

PBT advances fisheries monitoring in a number of ways. PBT is highly efficient, as the tagging process requires only genotyping the parents to produce a 100% tag rate of offspring, which can lead to higher tag recovery rates and improved statistical precision of estimates. Additionally, there is no physical tag loss or handling mortality associated with PBT, parentage assignments can be obtained non-lethally via a small tissue sample, and large-scale tagging can occur at a much lower cost compared to physical marking and tagging methods. To integrate PBT recovery data into the current salmon management framework, unmarked salmon contacted in monitoring programs will require a tissue sample.

Steelhead Report Card Changes

Section 1.74, 5.88, and 701 relating to the Steelhead report card: To better align with seasonal adult steelhead run timing, improve data management, and assess non-compliant reporting, the Card reporting period would be changed from a 12-month calendar period to a 9-month seasonal period. The new Card reporting period would be August 1st through April 30th the following year and required to be returned or

reported to the Department by May 31st. The Card would be required for anglers targeting any steelhead or Rainbow Trout in anadromous waters during the 9-month season. Anglers would be able to obtain the subsequent season Card starting July 15th to allow time for the Department to process the previous season's Cards returned by May 31st. Any Card holder who fails to return/report by the May 31st deadline shall be subject to a non-return fee and will not be able to obtain any subsequent season's Card until that fee is paid. From May 1st through July 31st of each year, anglers would not need a Card to fish for steelhead or Rainbow Trout in anadromous waters. (Submitted 2025)

These changes are necessary because:

- Current lack of data collection and inability to analyze data in a timely fashion.

Shifting the reporting months to mirror the 9-month seasonal run timing of steelhead allows the Department to process Cards more efficiently and have data readily available to inform management strategies for the steelhead fishery statewide.

- Inability to enforce regulations and poor clarity in current regulations.

By shifting the reporting period to 9 months, the Department will have time between seasons to assess non-compliance and can implement penalties prior to the subsequent year's Card is issues, including fees and prohibitions for non-compliant cardholders. This change is expected to increase reporting, which will increase data quality.

Additionally, the Department wants to better clarify that the Card is required when targeting Rainbow Trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss* in anadromous waters. There is currently a loophole in the language that allows an angler to state they are not fishing for steelhead, only Rainbow Trout, which technically does not require a Card. For improved enforcement, the language would be updated to include both terms and would require anglers to have a report card and fill it out when targeting either Rainbow Trout or steelhead in anadromous waters.

- Increased data accuracy.

Shifting the reporting period to mirror the seasonal run timing of returning and spawning steelhead between August to April will increase the ability to more accurately analyze data and manage steelhead runs. Adult steelhead are generally not present in most anadromous waters from May through July, so there is not a need to collect angler data during these months. Anglers will still be able to fish for Rainbow Trout/steelhead during these months in waters open to angling, however a Card will not be required. Anglers will also be able to continue to harvest a hatchery steelhead if caught during these months and not have to report on the Card.

- Cost and time saving.

The low return rates result in poor data collection causes pressure on Department staff to validate the Card data, which can create fiscal impacts for additional staff time and monitoring programs. Implementation of a non-return fee and a seasonal report card has demonstrated significant increases in reporting from other report card programs and would reduce the effort and cost to validate steelhead Card data caused by low returns.