

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 713, 1050, 7090, 7708, 7857, 8500, 8591, 8842, 9003, 9005, 9006 and 12000, of the Fish and Game Code, interpret or make specific sections 1050, 7090, 8500, 8590, 8591, 8595, 8842, 9000.5, 9001, 9002, 9003, 9005, 9006, 9007, 9008 and 9015 and proposes to amend sections 180.15, 180.2 and 180.5, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), relating to commercial coonstripe shrimp fishing.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14, CCR.

The California coonstripe shrimp commercial trap fishery has experienced increased participation in recent years, largely due to closures and limitations in other fisheries. This increase in fishing activity, particularly during peak whale migration, has elevated the risk of marine animal entanglement by increasing the amount of trap gear and vertical lines in the water. Three recent humpback whale entanglements were linked to this fishery, in direct conflict with federal protection under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act, and with California's goal of zero entanglement mortality.

In response to whale entanglements attributed to the coonstripe shrimp fishery, the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) approved emergency regulations in February 2025. The emergency regulations went into effect on April 7, 2025. At its August 2025 and December 2025 meetings, the Commission adopted 90-day extensions of the emergency regulations which are set to expire in April 2026.

Prior to the adoption of the emergency regulations, the coonstripe shrimp fishery was subject to regulations that did not limit the number of participants or the amount of gear deployed. This lack of restrictions on growth of participation and deployed gear posed a growing risk of marine life entanglement, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area, where coonstripe shrimp fishing activity overlaps with areas that whales are frequently observed. In addition, continued entanglements could lead to additional fishery restrictions through inclusion in a federal take reduction plan under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, litigation, or other fishery management actions such as more gear restrictions or closures.

Emergency amendments to Section 180.15 established a management boundary spanning from the Sonoma/Mendocino County line to both the Oregon and Mexico borders. New trap limits were set at 15 per ground line in the northern fishery and 40 in the southern, with vessel limits of 180 vertical lines in the north and 60 in the south. A 30-fathom depth limit was introduced for the northern fishery, and the previous control date was updated to February 13, 2025.

The proposed regulations would retain the amendments included in the emergency action and introduce additional amendments. These proposed changes are necessary to further reduce the risk of future marine life entanglements, ensure continued access to the fishery, and enable the state to continue to manage the fishery through a more durable regulatory framework that balances the needs of the commercial fishery with conservation objectives in the marine environment.

Proposed Regulation Changes

Section 180.15 (Emergency provisions carried into regular rulemaking)

- Establishes a management boundary at the Sonoma/Mendocino County line and management areas northward to the California/Oregon border, and southward to the United States/Mexico border.
- Defines and limits the numbers of "groundlines" and "vertical lines."
- Sets a 30-fathom depth limit for the northern fishery.
- Replaces the 2001 control date with a new date of February 13, 2025.
- Updates procedures for weather and hardship exemptions.

Additional Section 180.15 amendments (new)

- Redefines fishing seasons by the to two new management areas.
- Establishes minimum trap construction requirements for single and multi-chamber traps, and buoy marking requirements.
- Prohibits take of non- coonstripe species and restricts possession of coonstripe shrimp during closed seasons.

Section 180.2

- Exempts coonstripe shrimp traps from destruct device requirements.

Section 180.5

- Replaces the requirement to mark buoys with the operator's commercial fishing license identification number with a new requirement to mark buoys with the vessel's commercial boat registration number.

Benefit of the Regulations

The Fish and Game Commission (Commission) anticipates benefits to the State's environment by sustainably managing California's ocean resources by limiting the potential increase of marine life entanglement risk in the coonstripe shrimp fishery. The environmental risk arising from the rule is not regarded as significant, as the rule manages the resource more conservatively than existing regulations.

Consistency and Compatibility with Existing Regulations

The proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations. Section 20, Article IV, of the state Constitution specifies that the Legislature may delegate to the Commission such powers relating to the protection and propagation of fish and game as the Legislature sees fit. The Legislature has delegated to the Commission the power to adopt regulations governing the commercial shrimp fishery (Section 8591, Fish and Game Code). No other state agency has the authority to adopt regulations governing commercial coonstripe shrimp. The Commission has reviewed its own regulations and finds that the proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations. The Commission has searched the CCR for any regulations regarding the adoption of commercial coonstripe shrimp regulations; therefore, the Commission has concluded that the proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations.

Pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 11346.3 of the Government Code, the Commission finds that the proposed changes for reporting by coonstripe shrimp fishery participants serve the welfare of the people of the state and the coonstripe shrimp vessel trap permit holders themselves. This is because the Department currently lacks important data on the location and

number of coonstripe shrimp traps deployed and their various configurations of traps per ground line and number of vertical lines in the water. Knowing the identity, location, and amount of gear in the water will provide important information on fishing dynamics, and ultimately allow coonstripe fishery participants to continue activities as the Department makes management decisions.

Public Participation

Comments Submitted by Mail or Email

It is requested, but not required, that written comments be submitted on or before January 29, 2026 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 or on February 9, 2026. 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 at the California Natural Resources Building, Second Floor, 715 P Street, Sacramento, California on **Wednesday February 11, 2026**, and may continue on **Thursday February 12, 2026**. 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 strikeout 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 Jenn Bacon at FGC@fgc.ca.gov or at the preceding address or phone number. **Craig Shuman, Marine Regional Manager, Department of Fish and Wildlife, has been designated to respond to questions on the substance of the proposed regulations. Dr. Shuman can be reached at R7RegionalMgr@wildlife.ca.gov.**

Availability of Modified Text

If the regulations adopted by the Commission differ from but are sufficiently related to the action proposed, they will be available to the public for at least 15 days prior to the date of adoption. 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 Commission does not anticipate that the proposed regulations will have any statewide adverse economic impacts to businesses that would affect their ability to compete with businesses in other states. The limits for lines and traps per line exceed current practices and would not cause businesses in the fishery to incur a cost to comply, and the requirement for electronic monitoring devices for pop-up gear is only a cost for those who voluntarily elect to use that type of gear over conventional fishing traps. The primary cost associated with the proposed regulations is the cost of complying with the reporting requirements, which are approximately \$20 per season per vessel, and the initial buoy identification marking costs of \$664 per vessel for the northern fishery and \$235 for the southern fishery. See the STD 399 addendum for further details.

(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 impacts to the creation or elimination of jobs, the creation of new businesses or elimination of existing businesses within the state, or the expansion of businesses as a result of these regulations, as the seasonal cost of complying with the proposed reporting requirements is \$20 per vessel and the initial buoy marking costs of \$664 per vessel for the northern fishery and \$235 for the southern fishery are not significant enough to cause businesses to adjust their labor force or practices in any meaningful way. There are no anticipated benefits to the health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety. The Commission anticipates benefits to the State's environment by sustainably managing California's ocean resources by limiting the potential increase of marine life entanglement risk in the coonstripe shrimp fishery. The environmental risk arising from the rule is not regarded as significant, as the rule manages the resource more conservatively than existing regulations.

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

The Commission anticipates that the proposed regulations will only incur a \$20 per vessel compliance cost for the proposed reporting requirements. See the STD 399 addendum for further details.

(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.

California Fish and Game Commission

Melissa Miller-Henson
Executive Director

Dated: December 16, 2025