

## Committee Staff Summary for January 13, 2026 WRC

## 2. Sport Fishing

### Today's Item

Information ☐Action ☒

Discuss and potentially make recommendations for amendments to regulations regarding sport fishing.

### Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Initial vetting September 11, 2025; WRC
- **Today's discussion and potential recommendation** **January 13, 2026; WRC**
- Commission expected to consider WRC recommendation February 11-12, 2026

### Background

In September 2024 and January 2025, the Department presented at WRC meetings recommendations for amendments to sport fishing regulations. For workload management purposes, further consideration of the recommendations was postponed. At the September 2025 WRC meeting, the Department reintroduced its recommendations, and a handful of new ones, for potential consideration in a rulemaking this year.

Today, the Department will present a summary of its recommendations, including the 18 previously recommended changes; 3 new recommendations are being introduced at this meeting (Exhibit 1). Exhibit 2, an abbreviated summary, presents further detail and rationales for the Department's recommendations. WRC will continue its discussion of the Department's recommendations and may develop a WRC recommendation for Commission consideration at its February 2026 meeting.

Of note, one of the Department recommendations contemplates clarifying the method for measuring total length of most sport-caught fish. *The recommended definition would apply to fish caught in both inland and marine environments.* The recommendation was also highlighted at the November Marine Resources Committee meeting and received no comment; in March, the committee will potentially develop a recommendation for Commission consideration.

### Significant Public Comments (N/A)

### Recommendation

**Commission staff:** Recommend the Commission support a future rulemaking regarding sport fishing based on today's presentation and discussion.

**Department:** Support future a rulemaking regarding sport fishing, as recommended.

### Exhibits

1. [Department presentation](#)
2. [Abbreviated Summary of Sport Fishing Regulation Change Concept Proposals for the 2026 Sport Fish Rulemaking](#), received December 15, 2025

## Committee Staff Summary for January 13, 2026 WRC

### **Committee Direction/Recommendation**

The Wildlife Resources Committee recommends that the Commission support a future rulemaking regarding sport fishing based on the Department's recommendation and today's discussion.



Photo Credit: CDFW

# SPORT FISHING REGULATIONS

*Recommended Changes for 2027*



**PRESENTATION TO THE COMMISSION WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

January 13, 2026 | Maggie McCann

Fisheries Branch, California Department of Fish and Wildlife



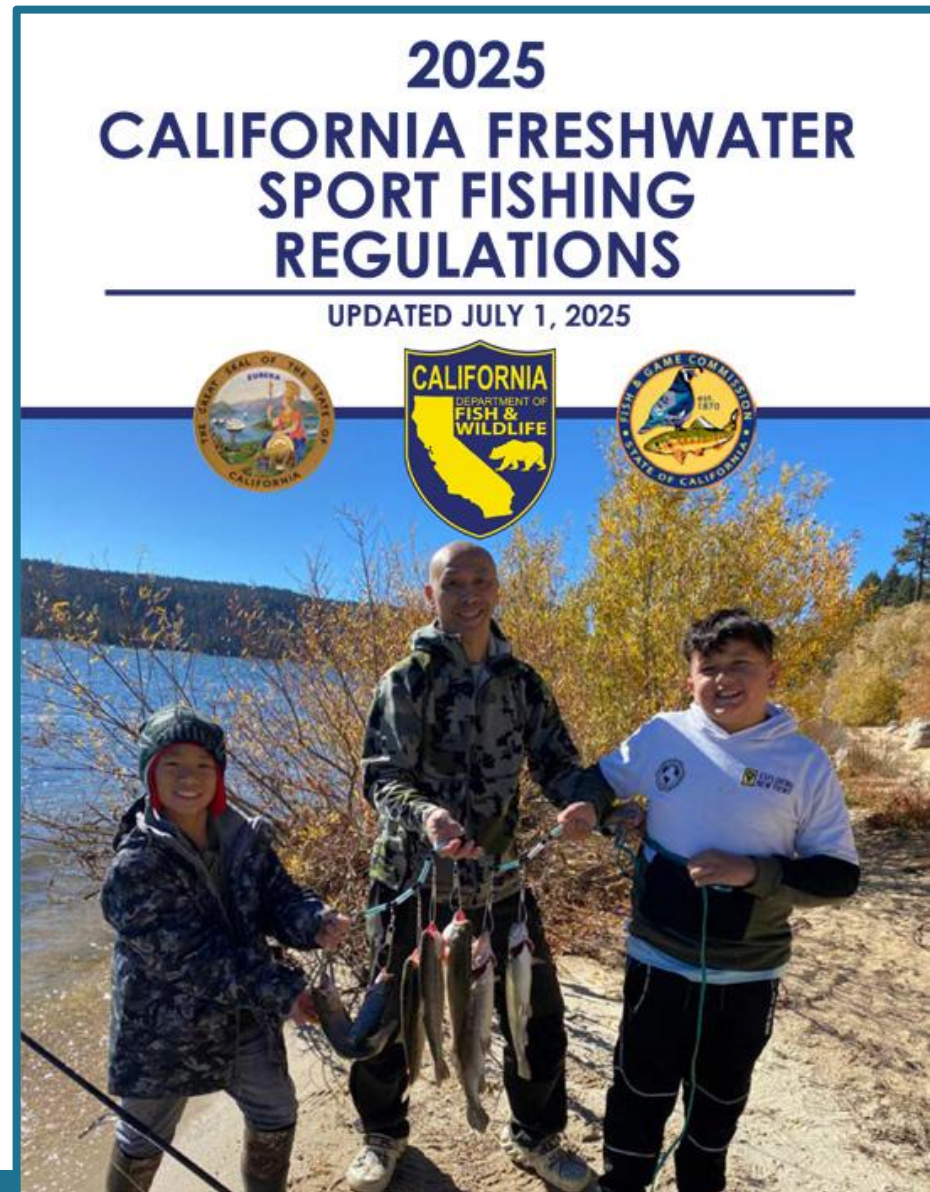
# Recommended Regulation Changes for 2027

18 recommendations in September:

- 9 new proposals submitted in 2025
- 9 deferred from 2024

3 new recommendations today:

- Remove Clear Lake Hitch section
- Fish measurement
- Klamath summer season



# Clear Lake Hitch Clean-Up

- Remove Section 2.11 relating to harvest of Clear Lake Hitch
- In 2014, Clear Lake Hitch were listed under the California Endangered Species Act as threatened and can no longer be taken without an incidental take permit
- This recommendation is to remove misleading language

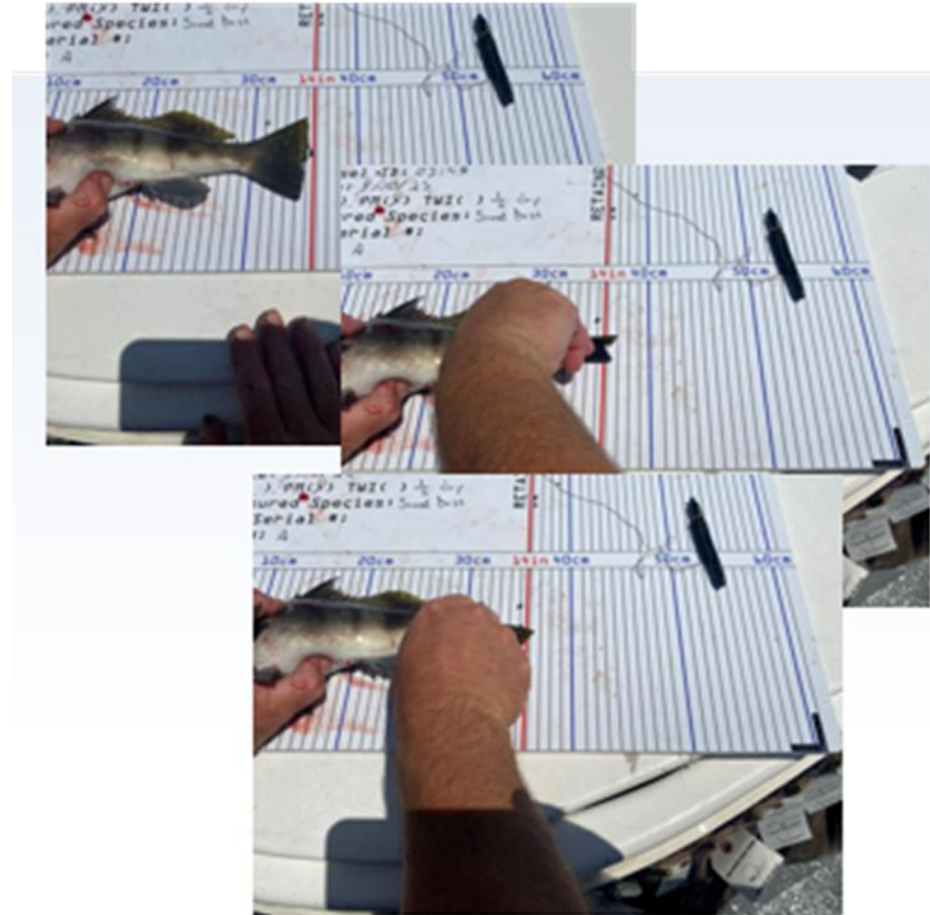


Photo credit:  
Matt Young, USGS



# Clarify Fish Measurements

- Public confusion about how to determine finfish length
- Fanning and swinging the tail is allowed for salmon and halibut
- This recommendation is to allow this for any species, unless otherwise clarified
- Changes “fish, mollusks, or crustaceans” to “fish and invertebrates”
- Clarifies that invertebrate measurement is found in individual sections



# Increase Fishing Opportunities in the Klamath

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- Increase recreational angling opportunity for trout within the Klamath Dam Removal project area
- Allow catch and release fishing within anadromous sections of the mainstem Klamath River from the Copco Road bridge at Copco to Lakeview Road bridge near Iron Gate in the summer
  - Fourth Saturday in May through August 31
- Restrictions include:
  - Only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used
  - Zero bag limit for wild and hatchery trout / steelhead
  - Closed to the take and possession of Chinook Salmon (no fishing)





# Proposed Timeline

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- January 13, 2026 WRC Meeting – WRC recommendation
- April 15-16, 2026 Commission Meeting – Notice hearing
- June 17-18, 2026 Commission Meeting – Discussion hearing
- August 12-13, 2026 Commission Meeting – Adoption hearing
- January 1, 2027 – If approved, requested effective date





# Questions/Contact



*Photo Credit: Flower Moye, CDFW*

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# California Department of Fish and Wildlife

## Abbreviated Summary of Sport Fishing Regulation Change Concept Proposals for the 2026 Sport Fish Rulemaking

Updated 12/10/25

Proposals Submitted after the September WRC indicated with asterisk and highlighted text.

### Regulation Language Clean Up:

**\*Section 1.62, Minimum and Maximum Size:** Amend section 1.62 to better define the method to determine total length of finfish. The proposal would clarify that total length is measured with the fish's mouth closed, laying flat on a horizontal surface, and that the tail may be pinched, fanned, or naturally swung. The proposal changes the phrase "fish, mollusks or crustaceans" to "finfish or invertebrates." The change also clarifies that measurement of invertebrate species is specified within the individual invertebrate regulations. (Submitted 2025 winter)

**\*Section 2.11, Special Fishing Methods – Lake County:** Remove section. In 2014, Clear Lake Hitch were listed under CESA as threatened and can no longer be taken without a CESA incidental take permit or MOU. This language conflicts with the take prohibitions for CLH and needs to be removed from Title 14. (Submitted 2025 winter)

**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, 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. (Submitted in 2024)

**Section 6.34:** correct the definition of "Southern District" 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)

**Section 7.50(b)(90):** Clean up and reorganize, group streams with similar regulations. (Submitted 2025)

**Section 7.50(b)(146):** 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. (submitted 2024)

## 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. Bass have had slow growth rates and stunted sizes, and this will improve population size structures. (Submitted 2024)

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

**Section 7.40(b)(11) (Battle Creek Shasta and Tehama cos.):** re-open lower Battle Creek from 1,250 feet below Coleman Fish Hatchery weir to its confluence with the Sacramento June 30 to December 31, with the restriction "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. (Submitted 2025)

**\*Section 7.40(b)(50)(2)(b) (Siskiyou Co.):** Increase fishing opportunity by allowing catch and release fishing within anadromous sections of the mainstem Klamath River from the Copco Road bridge at Copco to Lakeview Road bridge near Iron Gate (Siskiyou County). The open seasons would be a summer season from the fourth Saturday in May through August 31, with a restriction that only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used. Additional restrictions include a zero bag limit for hatchery trout and steelhead as well as being closed to the take and possession of Chinook Salmon. This change would provide recreational angling opportunity for freshwater fish (o.mykiss) during the summer months within the Klamath Dam Removal project area. The proposed summer season regulations would provide consistency with currently open waters adjacent to and upstream of section 2(b). (Submitted 2025 winter)

**Section 7.50(b)(47) Fall River Complex (Shasta and Siskiyou cos.).** Remove (L) Fall River Pond and (M) Fall River Lake from 7.50(b)(47) Fall River Complex (Shasta and Siskiyou Cos.). Fall River Pond and Fall River Lake would default to T14 5.85(a)(1) statewide general trout regulations. (Submitted 2025)

**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). Update language to include a special open season for youths participating in the Youth Fishing Derby. This change will increase angler opportunity by lengthening the season in the spring and shortening the winter season. (Submitted 2024)

**Section 8.00:** For low-flow closures, allow the ability to make split block decisions instead of solid block decisions. This will allow for more streams to remain open. (Submitted 2025)

## Gear-Related Changes

**Section 2.10 subsections (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. (Submitted 2025)

**Section 7.40(b)(40)(A)1-2, 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. (Submitted 2025)

**Section 7.40(b):** Add new special regulation sections for Clear Creek, Cow Creek, Cottonwood Creek, and Paynes Creek. Change Antelope Creek boundary to make angling more protective for Central Valley steelhead on this section. (Submitted 2024)

**Section 7.50(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 is currently the focus for other restoration opportunities and CDFW 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:** to add a 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 new low-flow closures on Pescadero Creek and Aptos and Soquel Creeks will protect steelhead when they are most vulnerable. (Submitted 2025)

## Other

**Section 1.73, subsections (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)

## 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 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 Coastal 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.