

TITLE 14. Fish and Game Commission

Notice of Proposed Changes in Regulations

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission), pursuant to the authority vested by Sections **200, 203, 219, 265, 270, 275, 1050, 1572, 3960, and 10502** of the California Fish and Game Code and to implement, interpret or make specific Sections **110, 200, 201, 203, 203.1, 219, 255, 265, 270, 275, 1050, 1570, 1571, 1572, 3950, 3960, 4750, 4751, 4752, 4753, 4754, 4755, 4758, 4759, 10500, and 10502** of said Code, proposes to **amend** Sections **365, 366, and 708.12, Title 14, California Code of Regulations**, relating to **bear hunting**.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

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

Current regulations in Section 365 specify hunt area boundaries, bag and possession limit of one black bear (*Ursus americanus*; henceforth referred to as bear) per license year, that no feed or bait may be used to attract a bear, season start dates and end dates, as well parameters for closing the season earlier. Specifically, once the Department has determined that 1,700 bears have been taken pursuant to the reporting, the Department shall close the season. Regulations in Section 366 describe regulations for archery bear hunting. Section 708.12 describes regulations surrounding bear license tag distribution, fees, quantity allowed to purchase, instructions for filling out license tags after harvest, use of guides, validation of black bear license tags, and reporting.

Bear harvest in California has not reached the existing harvest threshold of 1,700 set in 2002 since the 2012 season when the use of dogs to hunt bears was outlawed. California contains one of the largest bear populations, and one of the lowest bear harvest rates, in the United States.

The proposal is necessary to facilitate black bear hunting in congruence with expanding black bear range in northeastern California and to allow for hunter opportunity without impacting the population. This possession limit will continue to be bound by the current harvest threshold of 1,700 bears. The additional data collected will also enhance the Department's ability to monitor, conserve, and manage bears.

The proposed changes are as follows:

Amend subsection 365(a)(1) to redefine the hunt area boundaries to include the entirety of Lassen and Modoc counties. The expanded hunt area will add the Northeastern California Bear Conservation Region as defined in the Black Bear Conservation and Management Plan for California (2025).

Amend subsection 365(c) to change the possession limit to be twice the daily bag limit, i.e., allow hunters to harvest two bears in a license year.

Add subsection 365(c)(1) to reorder and clarify the definition of a legal bear.

Add subsection 365(c)(2) to state that hunters may not be in possession of more than one bear gall bladder, as such possession is prima facie evidence that bear gallbladders are possessed for sale, as defined in Fish and Game Code Section 4758 (b).

Amend subsection 366(c) to change the possession limit to be twice the daily bag limit, i.e., allow hunters to harvest two bears in a license year.

Add subsection 366(c)(1) to reorder and clarify the definition of a legal bear, specific to the archery season.

Add subsection 366(c)(2) to state that hunters may not be in possession of more than one bear gall bladder, as such possession is prima facie evidence that bear gallbladders are possessed for sale, as defined in Fish and Game Code Section 4758 (b), specific to the archery season.

Amend subsection 708.12(a)(4) to allow for the purchase of up to two bear license tags during any one license year.

Benefit of the Regulations

As set forth in FGC Section 1801, it is the policy of the state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all the citizens of the state. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, the maintenance of ecologically functional populations of bears and supporting recreational opportunity. Adoption of science-based hunting regulations supports ecologically functional bear populations to ensure those objectives are met. The fees that hunters pay for licenses and tags help fund wildlife conservation and management.

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 bear hunting, and reporting requirements (California Fish and Game Code Section 200). No other state agency has the authority to adopt regulations governing bear hunting and reporting requirements. 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 bear regulations; therefore, the Commission has concluded that the proposed bear hunting and reporting regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations. Commission staff have also searched the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and, pursuant to subdivision (b)(6) of California Government Code Section 11346.2, have determined that the proposed regulations avoid unnecessary duplication and do not conflict with federal regulations contained in the CFR.

Pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 11346.3 of the Government Code, the Commission finds that the proposed changes for bear tag reporting associated with a potential second tag serve the welfare of the people of the state.

Public Participation

Comments Submitted by Mail or Email

It is requested, but not required, that written comments be submitted on or before **5:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 2, 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 **12:00 noon on Friday, April 10, 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 in the **Natural Resources Agency Headquarters, 715 P Street, 2nd Floor, Sacramento, California**, which will commence at **8:00 a.m. on February 11, 2026**, and may continue at **8:00 a.m., on February 12, 2026**. The Commission will make a reasonable effort to provide the public additional opportunities to observe or provide comment in the meeting through the Zoom videoconference platform by computer, mobile device, or telephone connections. However, the Commission cannot guarantee the accessibility or functionality of the remote connection options. Should technical issues affect remote attendee access or quality, an attempt will be made to resolve them, but the meeting will continue with in-person attendees. Instructions for participation in the **webinar/teleconference** hearing will be posted at www.fgc.ca.gov in advance of the meeting or may be obtained by calling 916-653-4899. Please refer to the Commission meeting agenda, which will be available at least 10 days prior to the meeting, for the most current information.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that any person interested may present statements, orally or in writing, relevant to this action at a hearing to be held in **Sacramento, California**, which will commence at **8:00 a.m. on April 16, 2026** and may continue at **8:00 a.m. on April 17, 2026**. The exact location of this meeting has not yet been determined. As soon as this information is available but not less than ten days before the hearing, a continuation notice will be sent to interested and affected parties providing the exact location. The continuation notice will also be published on the Commission's website. The Commission will make a reasonable effort to provide the public additional opportunities to observe or provide comment in the meeting through the Zoom videoconference platform by computer, mobile device, or telephone connections. However, the Commission cannot guarantee the accessibility or functionality of the remote connection options. Should technical issues affect remote attendee access or quality, an attempt will be made to resolve them, but the meeting will continue with in-person attendees. 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

David Haug at FGC@fgc.ca.gov or at the preceding address or phone number. **Dr. Arjun Dheer, Statewide Black Bear Coordinator, Department of Fish and Wildlife, BigGame@wildlife.ca.gov, has been designated to respond to questions on the substance of the proposed regulations.**

Availability of Modified Text

If the regulations adopted by the Commission differ from but are sufficiently related to the action proposed, they will be available to the public for at least 15 days prior to the date of adoption. Circumstances beyond the control of the Commission (e.g., timing of Federal regulation adoption, timing of resource data collection, timelines do not allow, etc.) or changes made to be responsive to public recommendation and comments during the regulatory process may preclude full compliance with the 15-day comment period, and the Commission will exercise its powers under Section 265 of the Fish and Game Code. Regulations adopted pursuant to this section are not subject to the time periods for adoption, amendment or repeal of regulations prescribed in sections 11343.4, 11346.4, 11346.8 and 11347.1 of the Government Code. Any person interested may obtain a copy of said regulations prior to the date of adoption by contacting the agency representative named herein.

If the regulatory proposal is adopted, the final statement of reasons may be obtained from the address above when it has been received from the agency program staff.

Impact of Regulatory Action/Results of the Economic Impact Assessment

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

- (a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Business, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States:

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed action adjusts tag quotas for existing hunts by introducing a second bear tag. Given the number of tags available and the area over which they are distributed, these proposals are economically neutral to business.

- (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 impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs or businesses within the State; no significant impacts to the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California are anticipated. While approximately 1-2% of bear hunters use guides, the allowance of a second bear tag is unlikely to stimulate demand in a way that would cause guides to enter the market given the years of experience and skill it takes to become one, and for similar reasons is not expected to cause existing guides to expand their businesses by hiring additional guides. The Commission

does not anticipate direct benefits to the general health and welfare of California residents, the environment, or to worker safety, however bear hunters will benefit generally through access to recreational opportunities created by the proposed changes.

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

The Commission is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action.

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

No new costs/savings or changes to federal funding are anticipated for state agencies. However, the Department is projected to experience higher bear tag sales with the allowance of a second bear tag that may result in revenue increases. Together, the projected revenue increase may be \$158,474.80 annually (see STD399 and Addendum).

(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.

(i) Business Reporting Requirements:

The proposed action does not impose a business reporting requirement.

Effect on Small Business

It has been determined that the adoption of these regulations may affect small business. The Commission has drafted the regulations in Plain English pursuant to Government Code Sections 11342.580 and 11346.2(a)(1).

Consideration of Alternatives

The Commission must determine that no reasonable alternative considered by the Commission, or that has otherwise been identified and brought to the attention of the Commission, would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the action is proposed, would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the proposed action, or would be more cost effective to affected private persons and equally effective in implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law.

FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

Dated: **January 13, 2026**

Melissa Miller-Henson
Executive Director