

State of California
Fish and Game Commission

Final Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action
Amend Section 502, Title 14, California Code of Regulations

Re: Waterfowl, Migratory; American Coot and Common Moorhen (Common Gallinule)

I. Dates of Statements of Reasons

(a) Initial Statement of Reasons Date: November 3, 2025

(b) Final Statement of Reasons Date: April 27, 2026

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing

 Date: December 11, 2025 Location: Sacramento, CA

(b) Discussion Hearing

 Date: February 12, 2026 Location: Sacramento, CA

(c) Adoption Hearing

 Date: April 16, 2026 Location: Sacramento, CA

III. Update

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 refers to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife unless otherwise specified.

On April 1, 2026, the Department transmitted a memorandum to the Commission that summarized the public comments received during the public comment period. The Commission concurs with the Department's responses to the comments in the Department's April 1, 2026 memo.

At its April 16, 2026 meeting, the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) adopted the specific season lengths and daily bag limits for the 2026-27 waterfowl hunting season as recommended by the Department and provided in the Adopted Regulatory Language. The Commission also adopted other minor editorial changes to clarify the regulations and to comply with the federal Frameworks established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

The originally proposed regulatory language in the Initial Statement of Reasons contained a range of season lengths and daily bag limits, contingent upon the establishment of federal Frameworks. These frameworks were proposed by the Service in October and specify the maximum season lengths and daily bag limits. In addition, they also indicate that the North Coast Special Management Area late goose season dates should be concurrent with the adjacent zone in Oregon, and the Colorado River

Zone season dates and daily bag limits should be concurrent with the adjacent zone in Arizona.

IV. Summary of Primary Considerations Raised in Support of or Opposition to the Proposed Actions and Reasons for Rejecting Those Considerations

(a) Comment Source: April 16, 2026 public testimony from Mark Hennelly (California Waterfowl Association) and Bill Gaines.

Supports Department recommendation.

Response: The Commission adopted the Department's recommendation.

(b) Comment Source: March 26, 2026 letter from Mark Hennelly (California Waterfowl Association)

Supports the Department's recommendation. .

Response: The Commission adopted the Department's recommendation.

(c) Comment Source: February 12, 2026 public testimony from Mark Hennelly (California Waterfowl Association) and Bill Gaines (Tulare Basin Wetland Association, Cal-Ore Wetlands and Waterfowl Council, Suisun Resource Conservation District and Black Brant Group)

Supports the Department's recommendation. .

Response: The Commission adopted the Department's recommendation.

V. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No other alternatives were identified by or brought to the attention of Commission staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative

The No Change Alternative would retain the 2025-26 regulations for the 2026-27 season which may place the state out of compliance with federal regulations (e.g. white-fronted goose daily bag limit). Calendar progression necessitates modifying allowable hunting dates in regulatory language, including for falconry-only seasons, that are adjusted annually based on general season length selection.

(c) Consideration of Alternatives

In view of information currently possessed, no alternative considered would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the regulation is proposed, would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the adopted regulation, or would be more cost effective to affected private persons and equally effective in implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law.

- (d) Description of Reasonable Alternatives that Would Lessen Adverse Impact on Small Business. None.

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 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 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 regulations would provide additional recreational opportunities to the public and could result in minor increases in hunting days and hunter spending on equipment, fuel, food and accommodations.

- (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 on the creation or elimination of jobs, the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California. The proposed waterfowl regulations will set the 2026-27 waterfowl hunting season dates and bag limits within the federal Frameworks. The total hunting season length is proposed to remain the same as the current (2025-26) 107 days, with only modifications to the season types (duck, goose or falconry-only); these modifications will have little to no impacts to jobs and/or businesses that provide services to waterfowl hunters.

The Commission anticipates that the proposed 2026-27 waterfowl hunting regulations will provide benefits for the health and welfare of California residents by providing opportunity for outdoor activity. The Commission expects no benefits to worker safety as that is not a subject of the proposed regulation. The Commission does expect benefits to the environment in that setting these regulations facilitates maintenance of sufficient waterfowl populations and their habitats while providing for the public's beneficial use and enjoyment.

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

None.

- (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.

VII. Documents Supporting Regulatory Change

(a) Draft Migratory Game Bird Hunting Season Frameworks, 2026–27, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

(b) U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation

Updated Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Current regulations in Section 502, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), provide definitions, hunting zone descriptions, and 2025-26 season opening and closing dates, and daily bag and possession limits for hunting of waterfowl. The proposed Frameworks for the 2026-27 season were approved by the Flyway councils in September and will be considered at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Regulations Committee meeting in November. The Frameworks allow for a liberal duck season which includes: a 107-day season; a 7 daily duck limit including 7 mallards but only 2 hen mallards, 3 pintail, 2 canvasback, 2 redheads, and 2 scaup (during an 86-day season); and closing no later than January 31.

A range of season length (zero bag limit represents a closed season) and bag limit are provided for black brant. The ranges are necessary, as the black brant Framework cannot be determined until the Pacific Flyway Fall Brant Survey is conducted in October 2025. The proposed season length and bag limit will be updated per the regulatory packages identified in the Black Brant Harvest Strategy pending results of the fall 2025 survey by the February 2026 Commission meeting. See the Summary of Proposed Waterfowl Hunting Regulations for 2026-27 table in the Initial Statement of Reasons for a summary of season lengths and bag limits.

Lastly, Federal regulations provide that California's hunting regulations should conform to those of Arizona in the Colorado River Zone and those of Oregon in the North Coast Special Management Area.

The Department-recommended changes to Section 502 are:

- 1) Modify the duck season length to 100 days for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone in subsection 502(d)(2)(B), the Southern California Zone in subsection 502(d)(3)(B), and the Balance of State Zone in subsection 502(d)(5)(B).
- 2) Modify the regular goose season length to 100 days for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone in subsection 502(d)(2)(B), the Southern California Zone in subsection 502(d)(3)(B) and the Balance of State Zone in subsection 502(d)(5)(B).
- 3) Increase the Large Canada goose daily bag limit to 3 in the Northeastern California Zone in subsection 502(d)(1)(C) and the Klamath Basin Special Management Area in subsection 502(d)(6)(C)3.
- 4) Decrease the white-fronted goose daily bag limit in the Northeastern California, Southern San Joaquin Valley and the Balance of State zones and the Klamath Basin Special Management Area to 6, subsections 502(d)(1, 2 and 5)(C) and 502(d)(6)(C)3., respectively.
- 5) Allow three days of falconry-only season for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones in subsections 502(g)(1)(B)2. through 4., respectively.

Benefits of the regulations

The benefits of the proposed regulations are consistency with federal law and the sustainable management of the state's waterfowl resources. Continued benefits to jobs and/or businesses that provide services to waterfowl hunters will be realized with the continued adoption of waterfowl hunting seasons in 2026-27.

Evaluation of incompatibility with existing regulations

The Commission has reviewed its regulations in Title 14, CCR, and conducted a search of other regulations on this topic and has concluded that the proposed amendments to Section 502 are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations. No other state agency has the authority to promulgate waterfowl hunting regulations. Commission staff has also searched the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and, pursuant to California Government Code subdivision 11346.2(b)(6), has determined that the proposed regulations avoid unnecessary duplication and do not conflict with federal regulations contained in the CFR.

Update

At the April 16, 2026, meeting, the Commission adopted the specific season lengths and daily bag limits for the 2026-27 waterfowl hunting season as provided in the attached regulatory text. The Commission also adopted other minor editorial changes to clarify the regulations and to comply with the federal Frameworks. The Final Environmental Document for Section 502 dated April 16, 2026 was also adopted and added to the rulemaking file after the 45-day notice period.

There have been no changes in applicable laws or to the effect of the proposed regulations from the laws and effects described in the Notice of Proposed Action.