State of California
Fish and Game Commission
Final Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action

Amend Sections 1.62, 1.73, 1.74, 2.10, 2.11, 4.20, 5.00, 5.65, 5.85, 5.88, 6.34, 6.35, 7.00, 7.40, 7.50, 8.00, 8.10, 28.25, 28.30, 28.32, 28.35, 230, and 701, Title 14, California Code of Regulations
Re: Sport Fishing 2026 (Inland and Marine)

I. Dates of Statements of Reasons:

(a) Date of Initial Statement of Reasons: February 23, 2026

(b) Final Statement of Reasons: August 17, 2026

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing:

Date: April 16, 2026 Location: Sacramento

(b) Discussion Hearing:

Date: June 18, 2026 Location: Sacramento

(c) Adoption Hearing

Date: August 13, 2026

Location: Sacramento

III. Update

At the August 12-13, 2026, Commission meeting, the Commission adopted the proposed changes as described in the ISOR.

There was a minor nonsubstantive edit to the proposed regulatory text, in which the word “length” was mistakenly struck in the phrase “total length” in Section 28.30. The regulatory text has been updated to correct this error. Only minor nonsubstative edits were made to the Final Statement of Reasons (FSOR) regulatory text.

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

Comment:

June 18, 2026—Merit McCrea, California Sportfishing Association (verbal comment).

Commenter supports the Department’s recommendations regarding changes in determining finfish length and noted that the fleet will not be impacted by these regulation amendments and the California Sportfishing Association supports the amendments.

Response:

Comment noted and appreciated.

Comment:

June 18, 2026 – Brandon W. (verbal comment).

Commenter supports the Department's recommendation to allow fishing in the upper Klamath River.

Response:

Comment noted and appreciated.

V. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No alternatives were identified by or brought to the attention of Commission staff that would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the regulation is proposed, would be as effective and less burdensome, or would be more cost effective and equally effective.

(b) No Change Alternative

The No Change Alternative would leave the current regulations in place.

Impact of Regulatory Action

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the ~~**proposed**~~ **adopted** 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**~~ **adopted** 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 changes provide clarification of existing regulations that are necessary for the continued preservation of fisheries resources, while providing sport fishing opportunities and thus, the prevention of adverse economic impacts.

(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 adverse impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state. The Commission does not anticipate adverse impacts on the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses or the expansion of businesses in California. The ~~**proposed**~~ **adopted** changes are to provide clarification of existing regulations or that provide minor increases in fishing opportunities. These changes are not anticipated to change the level of fishing activity enough to affect the demand for goods and services related to sport fishing enough to impact the demand for labor, nor induce the creation of new businesses, the elimination, nor the expansion of businesses in California.

The Commission anticipates benefits to the environment by the sustainable management of fishery resources throughout the state. The Commission anticipates general benefits to the health and welfare of Californians through expanded outdoor recreational opportunities and responsible management of public resources. The Commission does not anticipate any benefits to the health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety.

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

The Commission is not aware of any cost impacts that a business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the ~~**proposed**~~ **adopted** action. The ~~**proposed**~~ **adopted** non-reporting fee for steelhead report cards, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 7380 (effective Januray 1, 2027), introduces a $20 fee to any card holder failing to return/report by the May 31st deadline. Any angler who doesn't pay the non-reporting fee after the deadline will not be able to obtain ~~any~~ **the** subsequent season's card until that fee is paid. This fee can be entirely avoided if the angler returns the card in compliance with the regulation, or if anglers choose to fish in anadromous waters from May 1st through July 31st of each year, as they would not need a card to fish for steelhead or Rainbow Trout during that period.

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

None. No changes to costs or savings to federal funding are anticipated by the ~~**proposed**~~ **adopted** clarification of existing regulations. The Department program implementation and enforcement are projected to remain the same with a stable volume of fishing activity.

Department staff estimate that currently 30-35% of anglers return their steelhead report card, with an average of approximately 43,500 cards sold over the last six years[1], for an average of 30,450 to 28,275 non-returned cards. The proposed $20 non-return fee would mean a maximum potential of $609,000-$565,500 would be accrued in fines, representing additional revenue for the Department. However, this does not take into account a likely increase in return rates or the fact that not everyone will pay the fine, as suggested by the exact same changes from the lobster report card, which had an approximate 16% return rate from 2008-2011 without a non-return fee and increased reporting to 39%-54% from 2014 to 2025.

If the steelhead report card increased reporting rates similarly by 20-30%, the Department would have a projected 50-65% return rate and could potentially see 21,750 to 13,050 unreturned cards with a maximum revenue potential of $435,000 to $261,000 in accrued fines (average of $348,000). See STD 399 addendum for further details.

(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.

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

This regulatory proposal combines California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) and public requests for changes to California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, sections 1.62, 1.73, 1.74, 2.10, 2.11, 4.20, 5.00, 5.65, 5.85, 5.88, 6.34, 6.35, 7.00, 7.40, 7.50, 8.00, 8.10, 28.25, 28.30, 28.32, 28.35, 230, and 701, for the 2026 sport fishing regulatory cycle.

This proposal contains multiple amendments that would clarify sport fishing regulations, increase angler opportunities, change gear requirements, change fish measurement and sampling protocols, improve the steelhead report card and low-flow regulations, and protect vulnerable fish populations. These proposed regulatory changes are needed to effectively manage California's sport fisheries, and correct errors and inaccuracies in the existing regulations to reduce public confusion and improve regulatory enforcement.

The Department is proposing changes to the following regulations in Title 14, CCR:

Regulation Language Clarifications:
The proposed changes are necessary in order to enhance clarity or fix errors, and do not alter the application or enforcement of these regulations:

- **Section 2.11, Special Fishing Methods – Lake County:** In 2014, Clear Lake Hitch were listed under California Endangered Species Act (CESA) as threatened and can no longer be taken without a CESA incidental take permit or MOU. The language in Section 2.11 conflicts with the take prohibitions for Clear Lake Hitch and needs to be removed from Title 14 CCR.
- **Section 5.65, Shad, American**: In 2025 there was a regulation change to allow spearfishing as a method of take for American Shad in the Valley District in Section 2.30. The proposed change would add spearfishing as a method of take allowable for American Shad in the Valley District in Section 5.65. This would make Section 5.65 consistent with Section 2.30.
- **Section 5.85, subsection (a)(2), Trout**: This proposal would add Section 7.00, which lists general regulations in each District, to the list of sections excepted from general statewide trout regulations. This proposal would remove ambiguities associated with wardens enforcing fishing regulation violations.
- **Section 6.34, Southern District Definition**: The current regulations definition of the "Southern District" in Section 6.34 erroneously copies the Sierra District definition. This change would correct the language to the as-intended definition of the Southern District.
- **Section 7.50, subsection (b)(90), McCloud River and Tributaries**: This proposal would clean up, reorganize, and group streams with similar regulations in subsection 7.50(b)(90) for the McCloud River and tributaries. This would simplify the regulation, making it easier to understand by grouping waters with similar regulations.
- **Section 7.50(b)(146), Sq. Valley Creek**: The name of Sq. Valley Creek was changed by federal legislation through the Department of Interior's Order 3404 on September 8, 2022 to Yét Atwam Creek. This proposal would make the regulation text consistent with

federal legislation.

- **Section 230, subsection (g)(2), Issuance of Permits for Contests Offering Prize for the Taking of Game Fish**: There is a minor grammar error in subsection 230(g)(2) which has an ungrammatical ‘s’ that would be removed from the word “changes”.
- **Section 7.40, subsection (b)**: Updates to other regulations sections have been made in this proposal to update or remove unnecessary references to subsections 7.40(b) and 7.50(b) due to the continual changes in the numbering of these sections when waters are added or removed. There are minor edits to text to align subsection 7.40(b) and 7.50(b) language with the updated Section 8.00 language that is part of this proposal which will clarify boundaries in both sections where descriptions are unclear, provide consistent placement of text, and update subsection references between Section 8.00 and subsection 7.40(b) where needed.

Changes To Increase Fishing Opportunities

The proposed changes described below would increase fishing opportunities in the effected regulation sections.

- **Section 4.20, subsection (d) Bait Fish Use in the Sacramento River (Shasta and Tehama Co.):** This proposed change would move the upper limit of the Sacramento River upstream from Highway 32 Bridge to Deschutes Bridge for bait fish use. Generally, declining fish populations associated with drought and climate change have limited many fishing opportunities. At the same time Striped Bass populations have expanded into more areas of the Sacramento River, especially after the Red Bluff Diversion Dam was permanently opened. This proposed change would allow live fin fish to be used further up the Sacramento River which would increase fishing opportunities for striped bass and other non-native fishes that are currently limited use of lures and other methods. It may also increase harvest of these non-native species which could have a potential benefit on vulnerable salmonid populations.
- **Section 5.00, subsection (b), Black Bass (Lassen and Modoc Co.)**: This proposed change would remove the black bass minimum size requirement from waters in Lassen and Modoc counties, except for Mountain Meadows Reservoir where the minimum size would remain at 12 inches. Growth rates of largemouth bass are typically slow within Lassen and Modoc counties due shorter growing season attributable to the high elevation. Additionally, reservoirs containing large bass populations are often overrun with stunted bass and few bass are able to reach the 12-inch minimum size requirement for harvest. The 12-inch minimum size requirement reduces the number of harvested bass, which could affect the bass populations by further stunting their growth. Removing the minimum size requirement in these locations would increase the harvest of smaller bass and improve the size class structure within the bass populations. Mountain Meadows Reservoir is still recovering from being drained in 2015 and has the potential to grow trophy class bass as it has in the past. The 12-inch minimum size requirement at Mountain Meadows Reservoir would be maintained under the General Statewide Restrictions regulations allowing the bass population to grow and allow more small young bass to grow to the 12-inch size minimum and larger.
- **Section 7.00, subsection (b)(2), District General Regulations—Sierra District (Shasta and Tehama Co.)**: This proposed change would 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. Declining fish populations associated with drought and climate change have limited many fishing opportunities. At the same time, striped bass populations have expanded into more areas of the Sacramento River, especially after the Red Bluff Diversion Dam was permanently opened. The proposed split season with June 16 to September 30 dropped the artificial lure requirement for allowable use of live fin fish as bait during this period when bass.

- **Section 7.40, subsection (b)(11), Battle Creek (Shasta and Tehama Co.)**: This proposed change would 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 opportunities for native and non-native warmwater fish species and hatchery-origin trout and steelhead.
    - Lower Battle Creek from the mouth to Coleman Fish Hatchery weir is currently closed to angling year-round. Allowing angler access to lower Battle Creek beginning June 30 will increase fishing opportunities on Striped and Black Bass. Battle Creek was historically a popular steelhead fishery but was closed to angling in the early 1990's to ensure that Coleman National Fish Hatchery would annually secure sufficient adult steelhead broodstock.
    - Returns of hatchery-origin steelhead to Coleman National Fish Hatchery are now routinely in excess of broodstock collection targets. Presently these fish are only available to recreational anglers in the mainstem Sacramento River. However, due to a variety of factors, contact with these fish in the mainstem Sacramento River is extremely low. Furthermore, the mainstem Sacramento River steelhead fishery is primarily boat-based. Shore-based steelhead fishing on lower Battle Creek would provide opportunity to much broader angling interest groups.
- **Section 7.40, subsection (b)(50), Klamath River Basin Regulations:** This proposed change would increase fishing opportunity in the Klamath River 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 season 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 harvest limit for hatchery trout and steelhead as well as being closed to the take and possession of Chinook Salmon. This change would provide a recreational angling opportunity for freshwater fish 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 this subsection.
- **Section 7.50, subsection (b)(47), Fall River Complex (Shasta and Siskiyou Co.):** This proposed change would remove subsections (47)(L) Fall River Pond and (47)(M) Fall River Lake from 7.50(b)(47) Fall River Complex (Shasta and Siskiyou Co.). If removed from 7.50(b) Fall River Pond and Fall River Lake would then fall under regulation Section 5.85(a)(1) statewide general trout regulations for take allowances.
- **Section 7.50, subsection (b)(150), Susan River (Lassen Co.) and Section 8.10,**

Susan River Youth Derby: This proposed change would revert fishing regulations to the previous trout opener (Last Saturday in April through Nov. 15). The proposed change would also update language to include a special open season for youth participating in the Youth Fishing Derby in Section 8.10 to start prior to the proposed earlier season start. Reverting to the traditional trout season will increase angler opportunity by lengthening the season in the spring and shortening the winter season. During much of the winter the river is typically unfishable (due to ice and snow), so the winter provides little to no opportunity. Water in the Susan River can warm significantly in the late spring and early summer, as releases from McCoy Flat and Hog Flat reservoirs increase. Having the season open earlier will provide more opportunity while angling conditions are good, while not impacting spawning.

Changes to Fishing Gear, Measuring, and Sampling

The following proposed changes are related to fishing gear, measuring and sampling regulation restrictions:

- **Sections 1.62, 28.25, 28.30, 28.32, and 28.35, Minimum and Maximum Size and Alternate Length:**

  This proposed change would amend Section 1.62 to more clearly define the method to determine total length of finfish. The proposal would clarify that total length is measured with the fish's mouth closed, lying flat on a horizontal surface, and that the tail may be pinched, fanned, or naturally swung. Fanning and swinging of a fish's tail is expressly allowed for salmon and halibut but not specified in the general maximum length in Section 1.62. It has been a long-time practice for our law enforcement officers to allow this technique, but it is not consistently understood by anglers. Importantly, crew onboard Commercial Passenger Fishing vessels have requested clarification, to ensure they are measuring passenger's fish correctly.

  The proposed change also includes changing the phrase "fish, mollusks or crustaceans" to "finfish or invertebrates" and clarifies that measurement of invertebrate species is specified within the individual invertebrate regulations. The proposal also changes existing language that refers to "mollusks, or crustaceans" to the term "invertebrates" which is more inclusive and encompasses other groups like echinoderms. It clarifies that methods to determine length for invertebrates are found in the individual sub sections for those species.

  The proposed change additionally removes alternate length measurements from Section 1.62, and from the sections for barracuda, kelp and sand basses, and white sea bass, sections 28.25, 28.30, and 28.35 respectively. Alternate length is proposed to be removed as it causes unnecessary confusion and concerns with law enforcement. The allowance of retaining filleted fish, with associated minimum fillet lengths provided for these species, makes the use of an alternate length unnecessary. A provision to use either total length or a 5-pound minimum weight limit for bonito, found in section 28.32, was established to make recreational catch limits consistent with commercial catch limits.

- **Section 1.73, Salmon**: This proposed change would require any person in possession of a recreationally taken salmon in which an adipose fin is present to provide the Department a tissue sample upon request. This includes 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. Amending biological sample collection requirements to allow for use of Parentage-Based Tagging (PBT) in fisheries surveys 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. This proposal would allow the Department to integrate PBT recovery data into the current salmon management framework, allowing tissue samples to be collected from unmarked salmon contacted in monitoring programs.

- **Section 2.10(b)(3) and (b)(4), Hook and Weight Restrictions**:

  This proposed change would allow for the usage of a small lightweight weight directly attached below a hook and expansion of fishable waters with treble hooks on non-buoyant lures. The amendment of subsections 2.10(b)(3) and (4) would clarify 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 subsection 2.10(b). The change to the use of treble hooks on non-buoyant lures would have an expanded boundary within the Valley District. The use of treble hooks on non-buoyant lures would be permissive in portions of the mainstem Sacramento, American, Feather, and Yuba rivers. The gear type allowed in the newly permissive sections would be limited to lures made of soft or hard plastics, or wood, which would reduce snagging risk to salmonid species while creating more opportunity for non-salmonid angling.

  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 the need to intervene as frequently.

- **Section 7.40(b)(40)(A)1. and 2., Eel River**: This proposed change would update the gear restriction boundary to align with more recognizable features providing clarity for both anglers and law enforcement. The boundary line would change from the mouth of the Eel River to Fulmor Road, and instead be the mouth to Cock Robin Island, resulting in a slight shift downstream (~.5 miles).

Protective Changes for Vulnerable Populations

The following proposed changes are recommended to protect vulnerable populations while preserving fishing opportunities:

- **Sections 6.35 and subsection 7.00(b)(2), Sierra District Definition and District General Regulations**: This proposed change would modify the Sierra district boundary in Section 6.35 to include a small section of Yuba County ("Yuba County east of New Bullards Bar Dam;") to protect experimentally reintroduced Chinook fish, This change would also close Chinook Salmon fishing in the North Fork Feather River (NFFR) above Chester Diversion Dam, and on the North Yuba River (NYR) above New Bullards Bar Dam all year

in Section 7.00(b)(2).This proposal with also add two specific subsections in Section 7.00,the Sierra District (adding (b)(3) and (b)(4), the NFFR above Chester Diversion Dam, and on the 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. Scientific studies are currently being implemented within the NFFR, led by the California Department of Water Resources, and in the NYR, led by the Department, evaluating Spring-Run Chinook Salmon reintroduction to these historical habitats. Changing the regulation to close fishing of Chinook Salmon at all times of the year in these waterways will allow for study fish through various developmental stages (eggs, alevin, fry, parr, smolt, adult) to remain in the study area informing study results and reintroduction efforts.

- **Section 7.40, subsection (b) addition of Creeks with Special Regulations**: This proposed change would recommend adding new special regulation sections for Clear Creek (added as subsection (b)(28)), Cow Creek (added as subsection (b)(37)), Cottonwood Creek (added as subsection (b)(35)), and Paynes Creek (added as subsection (b)(74)). This proposal would also change the Antelope Creek boundary from the confluence with the North Fork downstream to Ponderosa Way crossing on the North Fork and South Fork to make angling more protective for Central Valley steelhead in this subsection. Local fishing opportunities are currently very limited due to a variety of overlapping regulations, some of which are not necessary. Allowing the public, especially children to catch warm water fish with bait in anadromous streams in the middle of the summer when anadromous fish species are not present would be very beneficial to the public and the Department's Recruit, Retain, Reactivate (R3) goals. With the exception of Clear Creek, Cow Creek, Cottonwood Creek, and Paynes Creek, the majority anadromous tributaries have specific protective regulations already present in 7.40; adding Clear Creek, Cow Creek, Cottonwood Creek, and Paynes Creek will complete this protective set of regulations. These additions will result in renumbering most of subsection 7.40(b) bodies of water to maintain alphabetical listing.
- **Section 7.50(b)(6), Arroyo Seco River (Monterey Co.):** On the Arroyo Seco River (Monterey Co.), above the waterfall located approximately 3.5 miles above the U.S. Forest Service Ranger Station, change the trout bag limit from 5 trout to 5 Brown Trout and 0 Rainbow Trout, and add a Special Restriction of "only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used". The upper Arroyo Seco River contains a population of native Coastal Rainbow Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss)*, offering a unique sport fishing opportunity in the Salinas River watershed in Monterey County. Like other trout populations throughout California, this population of native Coastal Rainbow Trout has likely been negatively impacted by increasingly severe drought conditions. The population has also likely been impacted by degradation of instream habitat conditions due to recent wildfires, such as the Dolan fire. The current fishing regulations allow for the harvest of 5 trout per person per day above the waterfall on the Arroyo Seco River. The upper Arroyo Seco River is in relatively close proximity to urban areas; thus, with the current 5 trout bag limit, there is the potential for high angler harvest of Coastal Rainbow Trout. The lack of a gear restriction for trout currently allows the potential for high deep-hooking and catch and release mortality rates that can be associated with the use of bait and barbed hooks when angling non-anadromous salmonids. Additionally, the upper Arroyo Seco contains a non-native population of Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*) which offers sport fishing opportunities, though they may negatively impact native Coastal Rainbow Trout through competition and

predation. Changing trout regulations in the upper Arroyo Seco to a 5 Brown Trout and 0 Rainbow Trout bag limit with an artificial lures with barbless hooks only special restriction will ensure that this recreational Rainbow Trout fishery is protected and sustainable, while allowing recreational anglers the option of harvesting non-native brown trout.

- **Section 7.50, subsection (b)(90), McCloud River and Tributaries (Shasta and Siskiyou Cos)**: This proposed change would add Trout Creek into subsection 7.50(b)(90), McCloud River and Tributaries under proposed paragraph (G), 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~~ **recently completed 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.

Steelhead Fishing Report and Restoration Card Changes, Sections 1.74, 5.88, and 701
To better align with seasonal adult steelhead run timing, improve data management, and assess non-compliant reporting, the Steelhead Fishing Report and Restoration Card (Card; steelhead report card) reporting period is proposed to be changed from a 12-month calendar period to a 9-month reporting period. The adjusted 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 this 9-month period. Anglers would be able to obtain the subsequent season Card starting July 1st to allow time for the Department to process the previous season's Cards returned by May 31st. Any Card holder who fails to return or report by the May 31st deadline shall be subject to a non-refundable non-return fee and will not be able to obtain the subsequent season 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.

Shifting the reporting months to mirror the 9-month period run timing of steelhead would allow the Department to process Cards more efficiently and have data readily available to inform management strategies for the steelhead fishery statewide. 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 report card holders.

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.

Additionally, the proposal would 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

Though the regulatory language pertinent to the Card appears across multiple sections of Title 14, it meets the "nonduplication" standard of Government Code Section 11349.1 because it improves the clarity of the regulation and provides ease of reference for those who are fishing and familiarizing themselves with applicable regulations.

Low-Flow Regulation Changes, Sections 7.00, 7.40 subsection (b), 7.50 subsection (b), and 8.00

This proposed change would reorganize, condense, and clean up the language in the low-flow regulations, standardize the identification of stream gauges, and remove streams from 8.00 that lack low-flow criteria.

- **Section 7.00, District General Regulations:** This proposal would add Section 8.00, which lists low-flow restrictions to the to the paragraph about existing restrictions (such as methods, gear, fishing hours, and use of bait) when angling in District waters. This proposal would remove ambiguities associated with anglers following regulations for low flow conditions, as well as wardens enforcing fishing regulation violations.
- **Section 7.40, subsection (b) and 7.50, subsection (b), Updates to Special Water Bodies regarding Low-Flow:** Proposed changes throughout the special waters tables in subsections 7.40(b) and 7.50(b) serve to better align subsection 7.40(b) language with the updated Section 8.00 language that is part of this proposal. Organizational changes, improves consistency informing the angler to be aware of low-flow considerations for the re-organized subsections 8.00(a), (b), or (c). These changes are necessary to clarify boundaries in both sections where descriptions are unclear, provide consistent placement of text, and update subsection references between 8.00, 7.40(b), and 7.50(b) as needed. In subsection (b) for Arroyo Seco Corralitos Creek, Llagas Creek, Pajaro River, Salinas River and tributaries, Uvas or Carnadero Creek references to Section 8.00 are removed, as these waters are proposed as being removed from the Low Flow restrictions due to lack of low flow threshold.
- **Section 8.00, Low-Flow Restrictions:** This proposed change would rewrite, reorganize, and simplify the low-flow regulations. A new website for low-flow fishing restrictions was launched in early 2025, which brought more attention to the language and content in

Section 8.00. Subsections 8.00(a) and (b), which previously directed anglers to different regional phone lines, may now be combined and condensed into the revised subsection 8.00(a) now that there is an online platform during the time period of September 1 through April 30. Subsection 8.00(c) for the San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Monterey county water bodies is restructured to the revised subsection 8.00(b). This effort began as an initiative to remove redundancies and improve stylistic inconsistencies in the regulation (i.e. standardized identification of stream gauges with USGS gauging station number, stream, and nearest town), and turned into a more expansive effort to improve Section 8.00 in its entirety for conciseness, clarity, and consistency in language, after input from Department regional staff. These changes will make the regulations easier to understand, thereby reducing angler confusion.

- The proposed changes described in subsections 8.00(a)(1) through (3) and (b)(1) through (3), would allow the ability to make split block decisions instead of solid block decisions. Allowing split block decisions has the potential to provide additional opportunity by adding 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 and update information, and the Department could provide 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 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.
    - New subsection 8.00(a): consolidate and update the low-flow conditions for river and stream closures including those water bodies listed from north to south within Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Sonoma, Napa, and Marin counties.
    - New subsection 8.00(b): consolidate and update the low-flow conditions for river and stream closures including those water bodies listed from north to south within San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties.

Benefit of the Regulations

As stated in Fish and Game Code Section 1700, Conservation of Aquatic Resources, it is the policy of this state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of the living resources of the ocean and other waters under the jurisdiction and influence of the state for the benefit of all the citizens of the state and to promote the development of local fisheries and distant water fisheries based in California in harmony with international law, respecting fishing and the conservation of the living resources of the ocean and other waters under the jurisdiction and influence of the state. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, the maintenance of sufficient populations of all species of aquatic organisms to ensure their continued existence, and the maintenance of a sufficient resource to support a reasonable sport use. Adoption of scientifically-based sport fish seasons, size limits, and bag and possession limits provides for the maintenance of sufficient populations sport fish to ensure their continued existence.

The benefits of the proposed regulations are consistent with the sustainable management of California's sport fisheries, general health and welfare of California residents, and promotion of businesses that rely on sport fishing throughout California.

Consistency and Compatibility with Existing Regulations

Article IV, Section 20 of the State Constitution specifies that the Legislature may delegate to the Fish and Game 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 regulate recreational fishing in waters of the state (Fish and Game Code sections 200, 205, 315, and 316.5). 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 California Code of Regulations and finds no other state agency regulations pertaining to sport fishing seasons, bag, gear and possession limits.

Update

At the August 12-13, 2026 Commission meeting, the Commission adopted the proposed changes as described in the Initial Statement of Reasons.

There was a minor nonsubstantive edit to the proposed regulatory text, in which the word "length" was mistakenly struck in the phrase "total length" in Section 28.30. The regulatory text has been updated to correct this error. Other minor changes to strikeout/underline formatting and baseline regulatory text were also made during review by the Office of Administrative Law to ensure accurate printing of the regulations. Only minor nonsubstative edits were made to the Final Statement of Reasons (FSOR) regulatory text.

Further, during review by the Office of Administrative Law, regulatory text citations in the ISOR to Title 14 Sections 7.40(b)(36), 7.50(b)(145), and 7.50(b)149) were identified as incorrect by one paragraph. Those citations have been corrected in this FSOR to 7.40(b)(37), 7.50(b)(146), and 7.50(b)(150) respectively. The errors appear in the ISOR on pages 2, 5, 9, 24, 27, and 29 and should likewise be understood to be referring to the correct sections identified here.