Committee Staff Summary for November 12, 2026 MRC

8. Recreational Gear Restrictions for White Shark

Today's Item **Information ☐** **Action ☒**

Receive Department update on emergency regulations in effect since July 2026 to further protect white sharks during environmental conditions that increase nearshore aggregations and increase likelihood of human interaction with sharks while fishing; discuss effectiveness and ongoing need; and discuss potential long-term regulatory measures.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

• Adoption of emergency regulations concerning recreational gear restrictions for white shark	June 17-18, 2026
• Marine Resources Committee (MRC) vetting and recommendation	July 16, 2026; MRC
• Approved MRC recommendation	August 12-13, 2026
• Adopted a 90-day extension of emergency regulations concerning recreational gear restrictions for white shark	October 13-16, 2026
• **Today, receive Department update on emergency regulations in effect since June 2026 and discuss potential long-term regulatory measures**	**November 12, 2026; MRC**

Background

At its June 2026 meeting, the Commission adopted emergency recreational ocean fishing regulations intended to reduce interactions with protected white sharks and address public-safety concerns associated with increased juvenile white shark aggregations in nearshore waters. The regulations took effect July 3, 2026, and apply to fishing from shore or within 1,000 yards of shore from Pigeon Point (San Mateo County) southward to the U.S./Mexico border; within this area, the regulations prohibit the use of wire or metallic leaders, hooks larger than 1.5 inches, and removal of hooked white sharks from the water. Although the included gear types are typically legal for targeting other shark species, recent incidents involving juvenile white sharks hooked on heavy tackle contributed to the Commission's decision to adopt the emergency restrictions. Additional background is provided in the July 2026 MRC staff summary (Exhibit 1).

At its July 2026 meeting, MRC reviewed the emergency action following substantial public interest and comment. Discussion included concerns raised by shore-based anglers who legally target other shark species and who indicated that the restricted gear is important for safely and effectively landing target species. MRC also discussed outreach and enforcement needs, potential biological effects of the restrictions, and the uncertainty surrounding the duration and extent of increased juvenile white shark presence associated with warm water / El Niño conditions. While MRC recommended that the Commission readopt the emergency regulations to avoid interruption of the protective measures while additional information became available, MRC was not prepared to recommend initiating a regular rulemaking at that time because of uncertainty regarding the continued need for the restrictions and their longer-term effects on

lawful shark fishing opportunities. The Commission subsequently approved readoption of the emergency regulations and requested that the Department provide an update at the November 2026 MRC meeting on implementation of the measures and considerations related to any potential long-term regulatory approach.

Update

Since the emergency regulations were implemented, the Department has continued to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures and gather information relevant to their administration and enforcement. The efforts include coordination with enforcement staff, stakeholder feedback, and observations regarding affected fisheries and interactions with protected white sharks.

For today's meeting, the Department will provide a verbal update on implementation of the emergency regulations, including observations related to enforcement, compliance, and affected fisheries. The Department will also discuss considerations relevant to potential future regulatory actions, including potential benefits of continuing some or all of the provisions through a regular rulemaking process.

Should the Commission wish to pursue a regular rulemaking to avoid a gap in protections currently provided by the emergency regulations, the rulemaking process would need to begin no later than the February 2027 Commission meeting. MRC may wish to discuss whether sufficient information is available to support a recommendation at this time, or whether additional information from the Department would be helpful before considering potential next steps.

Significant Public Comments

A central California pier and shore angler requests that the Commission consider lifting the gear restrictions in portions of the central coast where cooler fall water temperatures may reduce the likelihood of white shark interactions. The commenter specifically requests that the prohibition on wire leaders be removed for fishing from Pismo Pier and provides ocean-condition information in support of the request. (Exhibit 2)

Recommendation

Commission staff: Receive the Department update and discuss considerations related to a potential regular rulemaking regarding recreational gear restrictions intended to reduce white shark interactions. Provide guidance, if appropriate, regarding the development of a regular rulemaking and identify any regulatory measures or modifications that warrant further evaluation.

Exhibits

1. Staff summary for Agenda Item 3, from July 16, 2026 MRC meeting (*for background purposes only)*
2. Email with screenshots from "Angler Hatunax," received October 22, 2026

Committee Direction/Recommendation

The Marine Resources Committee recommends that the Commission **initiate** a regular rulemaking regarding recreational gear restrictions intended to reduce white shark interactions,

schedule a notice hearing for February 2027, and request that the Department work with staff to develop regulatory documents incorporating the following measures and potential modifications: _____.

OR

The Marine Resources Committee recommends that the Commission **not initiate** a regular rulemaking at this time; instead, request that the Department continue to monitor implementation of the emergency regulations and relevant biological, public safety, and enforcement information and, should future information indicate a need for long-term regulatory measures, return to the Commission with recommendations for consideration.

Committee Staff Summary for July 16, 2026 MRC
(*For background purposes only*)

3. Recreational Gear Restrictions for White Shark

Today's Item **Information ☐** **Action ☒**

Review emergency regulations adopted in June 2026 to further protect white sharks during environmental conditions that increase nearshore aggregations and increase likelihood of human interaction with sharks while fishing, discuss rationale, and consider possible next steps, including potential readoption, notice of regulation change, and any modifications.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Commission discussed and adopted emergency regulations — June 17-18, 2026
- **Today review emergency regulations and consider possible next steps** — **July 16, 2026; MRC**
- Commission consider potential readoption of emergency regulations — October 13-16, 2026

Background

The Department is responsible for managing shark fishing under regulations adopted by the Commission, and tracks interactions with white shark as a federally and state-protected species. At its June 2026 meeting, the Commission adopted emergency recreational ocean fishing regulations in response to projected increases in juvenile white shark presence associated with warmer El Niño conditions.

Specifically, the action established temporary restrictions for fishing from shore or within 1,000 yards of shore from Pigeon Point (San Mateo County) southward to the U.S./Mexico border. The restrictions include; (1) no use of wire or other metallic lines or leaders, (2) no hooks larger than 1.5 inches, and (3) no removal of hooked white sharks from the water. Although these gear types are typically legal for targeting other shark species, they have been involved in recent incidents in which juvenile white sharks were hooked with heavy tackle, resulting in injuries to a swimmer and harm to the sharks, including several mortalities.

The concerns regarding white shark are heightened this year by forecasted warmer-water conditions that shift the preferred range for juvenile white shark northward from Mexico and lead them to stay in California nearshore areas later in the year. The emergency regulations aim to deter illegal targeting of white sharks where nearshore aggregations are known to occur, reduce the likelihood and severity of incidental hooking of white sharks, improve post-release survival by preventing white sharks from trailing heavy gear, and reduce risks to ocean users posed by hooked white sharks or attached wire leaders.

More detailed background is provided in the June 2026 Commission meeting staff summary (Exhibit 1); associated supporting documentation and emergency regulatory language is available online at Staff Summary and Exhibits for Item 6, June 17-18, 2026 CFGC meeting.

Committee Staff Summary for July 16, 2026 MRC
(*For background purposes only*)

Update

The temporary emergency regulations went into effect on July 3, 2026 and will continue for 180 days unless extended through subsequent Commission action. The emergency regulations prompted media attention and online postings from shore-based shark-fishing enthusiasts and a shark conservation group. Hundreds of comments (individual and form letters) from the angling community, shark conservationists, and the general public were submitted before, during and after the public comment period (see Significant Public Comments). In light of the volume of interest, concerns, and suggestions received, the Department requested that this topic be added to the MRC agenda — the only MRC meeting scheduled prior to the timing required for a potential readoption of the emergency regulations.

Today's meeting provides an opportunity to review and discuss the emergency action, the specific measures adopted in regulation, and considerations for future actions to extend and/or modify the regulations. The Department will present an overview of the implemented measures, the rationale behind them, and implications for recreational anglers targeting other legally harvested shark species (Exhibit 2).

Today's discussion is intended to support MRC consideration and input on next steps, including potential readoption of the emergency regulations and possible initiation of a regular rulemaking beyond the emergency period of approximately one year. To avoid the emergency regulations expiring, readoption would need to occur in October 2026. If MRC recommends, and the Commission approves, pursuing a regular rulemaking to maintain the current measures and/or explore adjustments, a public notice hearing for that action should be scheduled for December 2026 if any significant changes to the regulations are anticipated or February 2027 if there are limited changes; the latter would allow additional discussion at the November 2026 MRC meeting before a Commission decision is made on the contents of a regular rulemaking.

Significant Public Comments

No public comments were submitted specifically for this meeting. However, during the emergency rulemaking comment period — from the emergency adoption on June 17 through the comment period ending Jun 30 — the Commission received written comments supporting the action from just over 450 individuals (31 unique comments and 420 form emails), and opposing the emergency action from 89 individuals (including several "template" letters). Staff transmitted all unique comments to the Department and a set of example form letters and template emails; as a result, the numbers reported here differ from those in the Department presentation (Exhibit 2). A brief overview of the comments received is provided here.

Support: Individual commenters supporting the action, including white shark bite survivors, shark advocates, California residents, and the general public, highlight the need to reduce dangerous interactions between hooked sharks and swimmers, protect apex predators, and close loopholes in the pre-emergency regulations. Many also urged the Commission to consider further restrictions on the use of chum, live bait, mechanical gaffs from piers, and drones for bait deployment. The form letters, the result of an online campaign, continue to be received (over 800 as of July 9). Sample comments are provided in Exhibit 4.

Committee Staff Summary for July 16, 2026 MRC
(*For background purposes only*)

Oppose: Commenters opposing the action, including shore-based shark anglers, express concern about impact on fishing for other shark species (notably from shore), potential harm of gear on sharks and the environment, and impacts to scientific research. Commenters suggested alternative measures, including increasing enforcement of current law and using education rather than broader restrictions. Others emphasized their right to fish and questioned the emergency justification. Sample comments are provided in Exhibit 5.

Responses: A summary of the comments by theme, and Department and staff responses to comments that were submitted to the Office of Administrative Law, is provided in Exhibit 3. The general responses in Exhibit 3 address all comments received by the Commission.

Recommendation

Commission staff: Recommend that the Commission continue gathering feedback on and results from the adopted regulations; and (1) schedule for October consideration of potentially readopting the emergency regulations, and consider whether to include a possible exception for smaller wire leaders if the regulation is readopted. (2) Delay any recommendation on initiating a regular rulemaking to allow time to learn from the feedback and outcomes of the emergency regulations, which may lead to identifying potential additional modifications, if any, that may be incorporated into a regular rulemaking. (3) Request that the Department provide an update at the November 2026 MRC meeting to inform a potential MRC recommendation regarding a regular rulemaking and the scheduling of public notice.

Department: Continue to gather feedback on and results from the adopted measures, and (1) schedule consideration of emergency readoption in October, and (2) consider scheduling a regular rulemaking notice for consideration in December. Consider a possible exception for smaller wire leaders and the need for modifications, if any, to be enforceable.

Exhibits

1. Staff summary for Agenda Item 6, June 17-18, 2026 Commission meeting (*for background purposes only*)
2. Department presentation
3. Summary of comments and staff responses to comments regarding the emergency regulations received during the comment period, June 17-30, 2026
4. Sample comments supporting the emergency measures, received June 17-30, 2026
5. Sample comments opposing the emergency measures, received June 17-30, 2026

Committee Direction/Recommendation

Motion 1, Emergency Readoption (October): The Marine Resources Committee recommends that the Commission consider readopting the emergency white shark gear restrictions at its October meeting, either:

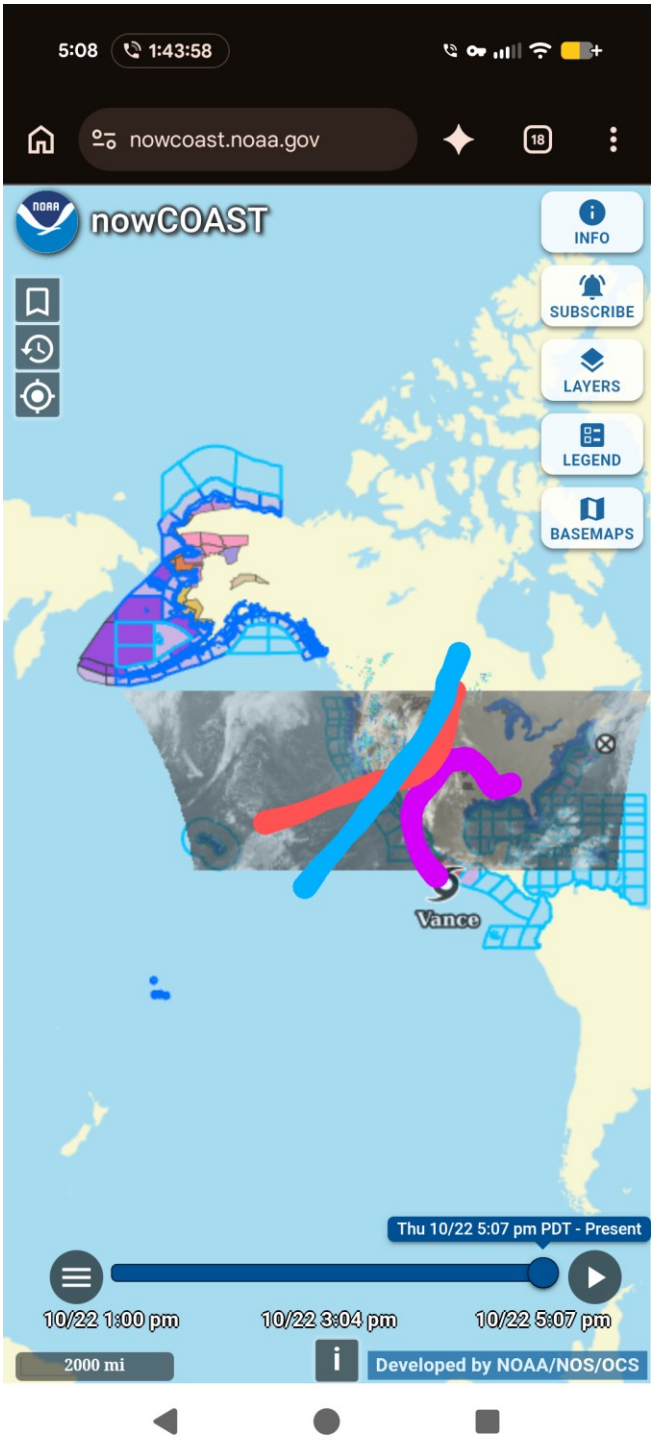
- with the current emergency measures *as adopted*; **or**
- with the following *modification(s)*: _____.

AND [next page]

Motion 2, Regular Rulemaking (Future)*:* The Marine Resources Committee recommends that the Commission either:

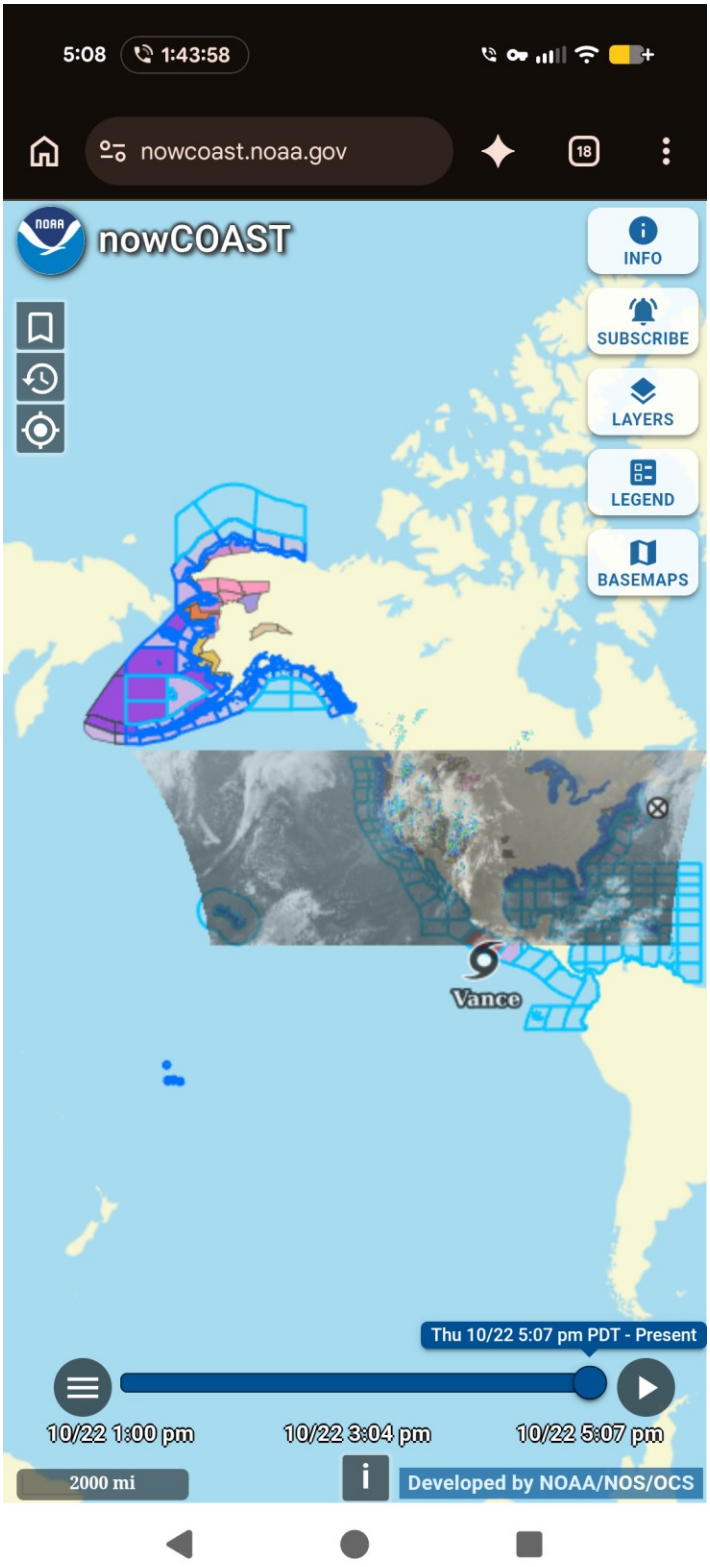
- ***not*** *schedule* a regular rulemaking at this time and return the topic to MRC for further discussion at the November 2026 MRC meeting; **or**
- *schedule* consideration of a regular rulemaking for the December Commission meeting, including the following potential modification(s) to the emergency measures: _____, and return the topic to MRC for further discussion at the November 2026 MRC meeting with an update and any recommended measures to incorporate into a regular rulemaking.

From: Angler Hatuna <[redacted]>
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2026 5:19 PM
To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
Subject: Re: Shark steel leaders lifting bans Central Coast

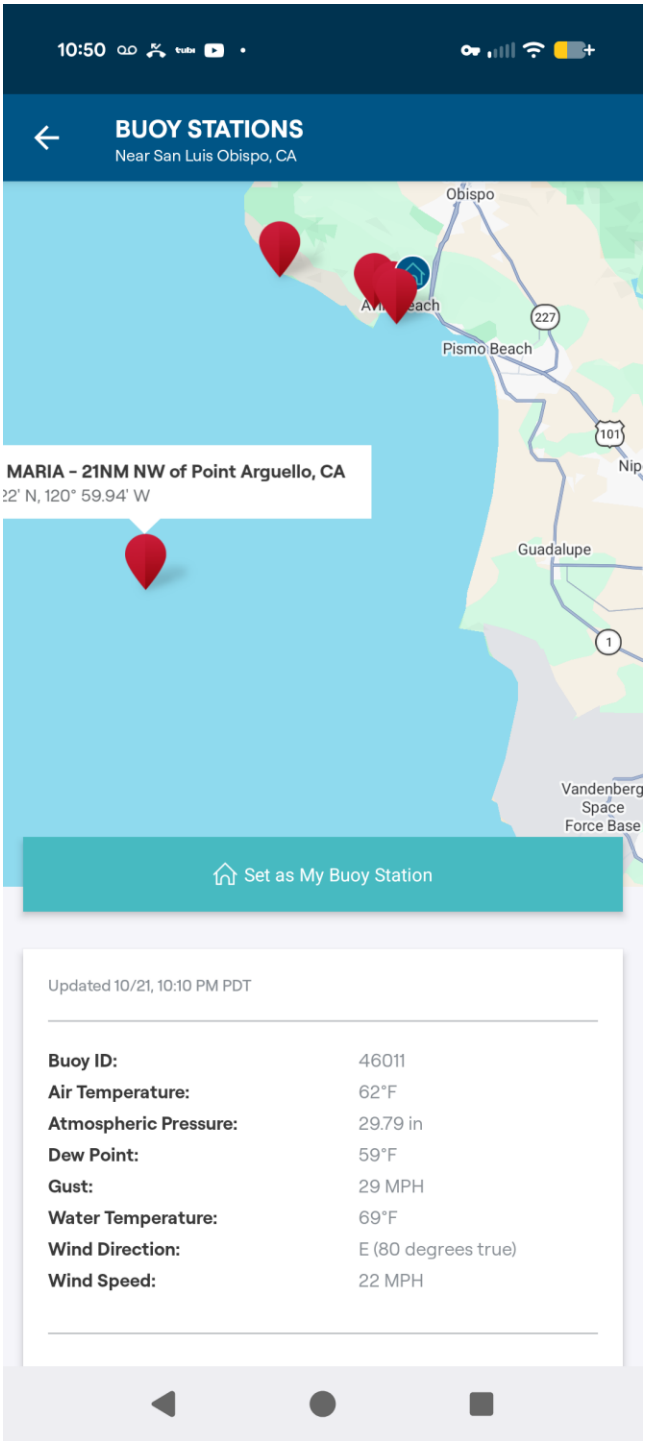


This November forecast prediction

On Thu, Oct 22, 2026, 5:10 PM Angler Hatuna < > wrote:



On Wed, Oct 21, 2026, 10:50 PM Angler Hatuna < > wrote:



On Wed, Oct 21, 2026, 10:41 PM Angler Hatuna < > wrote:

Now that the cold front is approaching the weather is starting to turn to fall and the water temperature are dropping in the central coast can you relax restrictions I would like to fish off the Pismo pier with steel leaders before the Christmas decorations come up.