State of California - Fish and Game Commission
PETITION TO THE CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION FOR REGULATION CHANGE
FGC 1 (Rev 06/19)

Tracking Number: (2026-21)

To request a change to regulations under the authority of the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission), you are required to submit this completed form to: California Fish and Game Commission, (physical address) 715 P Street, 16th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814, (mailing address) P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090 or via email to FGC@fgc.ca.gov. Note: This form is not intended for listing petitions for threatened or endangered species (see Section 670.1 of Title 14).

Incomplete forms will not be accepted. A petition is incomplete if it is not submitted on this form or fails to contain necessary information in each of the required categories listed on this form (Section I). A petition will be rejected if it does not pertain to issues under the Commission's authority. A petition may be denied if any petition requesting a functionally equivalent regulation change was considered within the previous 12 months and no information or data is being submitted beyond what was previously submitted. If you need help with this form, please contact Commission staff at (916) 653-4899 or FGC@fgc.ca.gov.

SECTION I: Required Information.

Please be succinct. Responses for Section I should not exceed five pages

1. Person or organization requesting the change (Required)

Name of primary contact person: David Hicks
Address:
Telephone number:
Email address:

2. Rulemaking Authority (Required) - Fish and Game Code sections 2118 and 2120, cited as authority for Title 14, California Code of Regulations, section 671; Fish and Game Code section 108 and Title 14, section 662 govern Commission regulation-change petitions. The Commission can amend its restricted-species list in section 671(c)(3)(C).

3. Overview (Required) - I ask the Commission to grant this petition for further consideration and direct CDFW to identify the evidence and reasoning for continuing to restrict captive-bred axolotls (Ambystoma mexicanum) under Title 14, section 671(c)(3)(C). If that review does not support the present treatment of this species, I propose a narrow amendment: "1. Genus Ambystoma (nonnative tiger salamander group)—(D), except captive-bred Ambystoma mexicanum lawfully acquired and kept in an indoor aquarium, provided that the animal is not released into the environment." The Commission could refine containment and animal-health terms during rulemaking. My request concerns axolotls specifically.

4. Rationale (Required) - The current entry restricts the genus Ambystoma and does not name axolotls separately. The regulation history records the addition of subsection (c)(3)(C) on February 27, 2001; the 1992 date elsewhere in section 671 refers to DFG Manual No. 671. I have not found the 2001 rulemaking file or a species-specific assessment online. That does not establish that none exists. Please identify who proposed the 2001 addition and provide the initial and final statements of reasons, scientific material and comments relied upon, and any later evaluation of A. mexicanum.

I ask CDFW to explain the factual basis for four aspects of the restriction as applied to captive-bred axolotls: (1) the likelihood that released animals could survive, reproduce and establish in identified California waters; (2) the likelihood of contact and successful hybridization with native California salamanders under natural conditions; (3) the likelihood of introducing or transmitting a pathogen through captive animals or aquarium wastewater; and (4) why measures such as proof of captive breeding, secure indoor housing, a no-release rule and appropriate animal-health practices would not adequately address those risks. Please distinguish demonstrated events from biological possibilities and state the evidence and uncertainty for each.

Axolotls normally remain fully aquatic as adults, and studies show a narrow preferred temperature range. Those features may limit establishment in many California waters. Yet researchers have observed survival and reproduction in suitable artificial

Mexican wetlands; I do not claim establishment is impossible in every California habitat. The documented California hybridization problem involves introduced barred tiger salamanders. A historic axolotl and tiger salamander laboratory cross required in vitro fertilization and further embryo manipulation to establish a surviving line. It does not establish the likelihood of natural hybridization in California waters. A study showed that axolotls became infected with Bsal after experimental exposure; it did not find Bsal in its unexposed controls or establish that pet axolotls routinely carry it.

These distinctions warrant a species-specific explanation for the current restriction. If the Commission has evidence of a meaningful risk that narrower rules cannot manage, I ask it to identify that evidence publicly. If it does not, I ask it to consider the proposed exemption through ordinary rulemaking.

SECTION II: Optional Information

5. Date of Petition: September 27, 2026

6. **Category of Proposed Change**

☐ Sport Fishing
☐ Commercial Fishing
☐ Hunting
☒ Other, please specify: Restricted species / captive-bred amphibians

7. **The proposal is to:** (*To determine section number(s), see current year regulation booklet or https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs*)

☒ Amend Title 14 Section(s): 671(c)(3)(C)
☐ Add New Title 14 Section(s): Not applicable.
☐ Repeal Title 14 Section(s): Not applicable.

8. If the proposal is related to a previously submitted petition that was rejected, specify the tracking number: Not applicable.
Or ☒ Not applicable.

9. Effective date: Upon completion of ordinary rulemaking; no emergency action requested.

10. Supporting documentation: Sources supporting the request for a species-specific evaluation:
1. Title 14 CCR §671, entry and regulatory history: https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/california/14-CCR-671
2. Ramos et al. (2025), captive-bred axolotl movement and survival in wetlands, PLOS ONE, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0314257.
3. Ramos et al. (2021), reproduction and juvenile survival in artificial wetlands, Aquatic Conservation, doi:10.1002/aqc.3520.
4. Effects of Water Temperature on Gonads Growth in Ambystoma mexicanum (2023), Animals 13:874, doi:10.3390/ani13050874.
5. Ryan, Johnson and Fitzpatrick (2009), California tiger salamander hybrid effects, PNAS, doi:10.1073/pnas.0902252106.
6. Woodcock et al. (2017), laboratory axolotl and tiger salamander genetic introgression, Scientific Reports, doi:10.1038/s41598-017-00059-1.
7. Gray et al. (2023), experimental Bsal susceptibility, Nature Communications, doi:10.1038/s41467-023-38979-4.
Please identify the 2001 rulemaking record for §671(c)(3)(C), including its proponent, reasons, scientific support and public comments.

11. Economic or Fiscal Impacts: I do not have a reliable fiscal estimate. A narrow exemption could allow California breeders and aquarium retailers to sell captive-bred animals and could reduce restricted-species enforcement for this species. CDFW may incur costs to assess disease and habitat risk and, if safeguards are adopted, to administer them. The Commission should quantify these effects in rulemaking rather than assume a net benefit.

12. Forms: If applicable, list any forms to be created, amended or repealed:

None proposed at this stage. CDFW may recommend documentation for captive-bred origin or animal health if warranted.

SECTION 3: FGC Staff Only

Date received: **9/27/2026**

FGC staff action:

- ☑ Accept - complete
- ☐ Reject - incomplete
- ☐ Reject - outside scope of FGC authority

Tracking Number

Date petitioner was notified of receipt of petition and pending action: _____

Meeting date for FGC consideration: _____

FGC action:

- ☐ Denied by FGC
- ☐ Denied - same as petition _____

Tracking Number

- ☐ Granted for consideration of regulation change