

STAFF SUMMARY FOR MARCH 15, 2016

4. FISHERIES AT RISK**Today's Item**Information Action

Consider re-adoption of 90-day emergency regulations extension for fisheries at risk due to drought conditions while FGC pursues permanent regulations under a separate rulemaking.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Adopt emergency regulations Jun 10-11, 2015; Mammoth Lakes
- Adopt 90-day extension of emergency regulations Dec 9-10, 2015; San Diego
- **Today re-adopt extension of emergency regulations Mar 15, 2016; Teleconference**

Background

In Jun 2015, FGC adopted emergency regulations regarding special measures for fisheries at risk due to drought conditions (Exhibit 1). The emergency regulation added Section 8.01, Title 14, CCR, which authorizes DFW to enact emergency closure or associated reopening of waters of the state to angling, using specific criteria to determine if such action is warranted.

At its Dec 2015 meeting, FGC adopted a 90-day extension of the emergency regulations, which were set to expire on Dec 29, 2015. At the same meeting, FGC authorized notice of its intent to adopt permanent regulations through a regular rulemaking proposal with revisions to refine the approach and associated language, and increase the efficacy of the current emergency action. The permanent regulation is scheduled for adoption at the April 13-14, 2016 FGC meeting; however, the 90-day emergency extension is set to expire on March 28, 2016. Therefore, a second 90-day extension would be required to maintain emergency regulations until the permanent regulation is in place (Exhibit 2).

Pursuant to Section 11346.1(h), Government Code, OAL may approve not more than two re-adoptions, each for a period not to exceed 90 days, of an emergency regulation that is the same as or substantially equivalent to an emergency regulation previously adopted by that agency. This action is for the second 90-day extension which will allow the original emergency action to remain in place pending the adoption and approval of the permanent regulations scheduled to become effective in late June.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)**Recommendations**

FGC staff recommends the adoption of a second 90-day extension of emergency regulations for the immediate conservation, preservation, or protection of fish resources.

Exhibits

1. [Original emergency action](#)
2. [Statement of emergency action to readopt](#)

STAFF SUMMARY FOR MARCH 15, 2016

Motion/Direction

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission adopts the proposed second 90-day extension of emergency regulations, as established in Section 8.01, based on its finding that the extension is necessary for the retention of immediate process for temporarily closing rivers to fishing while efforts are in place to make these regulations permanent.

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
STATEMENT OF PROPOSED EMERGENCY REGULATORY ACTION

Emergency Action to
Add Section 8.01,
Title 14, California Code of Regulations
Re: Special Measures for Fisheries at Risk due to Drought Conditions

I. Statement of Facts Constituting the Need for Emergency Regulatory Action

California continues to suffer under severe drought conditions with record low snow packs in 2014 and 2015. In early 2014, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. proclaimed a State of Emergency for California directing state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for the record level of drought conditions and also signed an Executive Order redoubling state drought actions with additional measures to strengthen the state's response to drought. On April 1, 2015, the Governor ordered state agencies to impose statewide mandatory water restrictions that will save water, increase enforcement against water waste, streamline the state's drought response, and invest in new drought resilient technologies for California.

The hydrological conditions in 2015 are expected to deteriorate from the record low 2014 conditions. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) continues to evaluate and manage the changing impacts of drought on threatened and endangered species and species of special concern, and develop contingency plans for state Wildlife Areas and Ecological Reserves to manage reduced water resources in the public interest.

Statewide water quality and quantity in many systems is likely to be inadequate to support fisheries as the summer progresses, resulting in impeded passage of spawning fish, increased vulnerability to mortality from predation and physiological stress, and increased angling harvest and/or hooking mortality. Furthermore, survival of eggs and juvenile fish in these systems over the coming months will be extremely low. The historically low water conditions will concentrate coldwater fish populations into shrinking pools of cold water habitat making them easy prey for illegal angling methods such as snagging, increased hooking mortality due to legal catch and release, over-harvest, as well as other human-related disturbances within their freshwater habitat. When coupled with drought-related environmental stressors, such as high water temperature, low dissolved oxygen, and severely reduced suitable habitat, these stressors can seriously affect reproductive success and survival rates.

Since 2014, the Department has worked with the Fish and Game Commission (Commission), using the best available science, to determine whether restricting fishing in certain areas will become necessary and prudent as drought conditions persist. The Department and the Commission have determined that a temporary approach is needed to give the Department effective tools to respond more rapidly to the deteriorating water quality and quantity conditions in California's waters for 2015.

Regulatory Proposal

Environmental conditions resulting from the drought may require temporary restrictions on fishing to protect fish populations and sustain future opportunity. These conditional changes may affect each waterbody and fish population differently based on hydrological responses to the drought. Increased angling mortality, harvest, and angling pressure are the key components used to evaluate potential effects associated with degraded environmental conditions and will need to be evaluated on a water by water basis and over time as conditions change.

To ensure that fisheries are protected under critical conditions stemming from the drought, the Department is proposing a set of triggers to guide fishing closure and reopening decisions. The Department's decision to close or open a water will be based on the most current information available, collected by professional staff trained in the associated fields. Criteria for evaluating aquatic conditions are based on site-specific monitoring efforts with an emphasis on listed fish species, species of special concern, and gamefish.

The following proposed criteria will be used to determine if an emergency fishing closure or associated reopening is warranted:

Any water of the state not currently listed in Section 8.00 of these regulations may be closed to fishing by the Department when the Director, or his or her designee, determines one or more the following conditions have been met:

- Water temperatures in occupied habitat exceed 70° Fahrenheit for over eight hours a day for three consecutive days.
- Dissolved oxygen levels in occupied habitat drop below 5 mg/L for any period of time over three consecutive days.
- Fish passage is impeded or blocked for fish species that rely on migration as part of a life history trait.
- Water levels for ponds, lakes and reservoirs drop below 10% of their capacity.
- Adult breeding population levels are estimated to be below 500 individuals.

All waters closed pursuant to this section will be reopened by the Department when the Director, or his or her designee, determines all of the following conditions have been met:

- Water temperatures in occupied habitat do not exceed 70° Fahrenheit for over eight hours a day for seven consecutive days.
- Dissolved oxygen levels in occupied habitat rise above 5 mg/L and are maintained at that level for seven consecutive days.
- Fish passage is available and that no impediment exists to strand or concentrate adults or juveniles during their migration.

- Water levels for ponds, lakes and reservoirs have recovered to greater than 10% of their capacity.
- Adult breeding populations are estimated to be recovered to greater than 500 individuals.

Justification and associated data for closure and reopening decisions will be provided to the Commission for any water that is subject to a fishing closure.

The Department and the Commission will work together to formulate a regular rulemaking proposal that will refine the approach and associated language based on experiences learned, feedback from the public, and revisions to increase the efficacy of this emergency action.

II. 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) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State:

None.

- (b) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies:

None.

- (c) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts:

None.

- (d) 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.

- (e) Effect on Housing Costs:

None.

III. Authority and Reference

The Fish and Game Commission proposes this emergency action pursuant to the authority vested by sections 200, 202, 205, 240, and 315 of the Fish and Game Code and to implement, interpret, or make specific sections 200, 202, 205, 240, and 315 of said Code.

IV. Section 240 Finding

Pursuant to Section 240 of the Fish and Game Code, the Commission finds that the adoption of this regulation is necessary for the immediate conservation, preservation, or protection of birds, mammals, reptiles, or fish, including, but not limited to, any nests or eggs thereof.

Updated Informative Digest (Plain English Overview)

California continues to suffer under severe drought conditions with record low snow packs in 2014 and 2015. In early 2014, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. proclaimed a State of Emergency for California directing state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for the record level of drought conditions and also signed an Executive Order redoubling state drought actions with additional measures to strengthen the state's response to drought. On April 1, 2015, the Governor ordered state agencies to impose statewide mandatory water restrictions that will save water, increase enforcement against water waste, streamline the state's drought response, and invest in new drought resilient technologies for California.

The hydrological conditions in 2015 are expected to deteriorate from the record low 2014 conditions. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) continues to evaluate and manage the changing impacts of drought on threatened and endangered species and species of special concern, and develop contingency plans for state Wildlife Areas and Ecological Reserves to manage reduced water resources in the public interest.

Statewide water quality and quantity in many systems is likely to be inadequate to support fisheries as the summer progresses, resulting in impeded passage of spawning fish, increased vulnerability to mortality from predation and physiological stress, and increased angling harvest and/or hooking mortality. Furthermore, survival of eggs and juvenile fish in these systems over the coming months will be extremely low. The historically low water conditions will concentrate coldwater fish populations into shrinking pools of cold water habitat making them easy prey for illegal angling methods such as snagging, increased hooking mortality due to legal catch and release, over-harvest, as well as other human-related disturbances within their freshwater habitat. When coupled with drought-related environmental stressors, such as high water temperature, poor water quality, and severely reduced suitable habitat, these stressors can seriously affect reproductive success and survival rates.

Since 2014, the Department has worked with the Fish and Game Commission (Commission), using the best available science, to determine whether restricting fishing in certain areas will become necessary and prudent as drought conditions persist. The Department and the Commission have determined that a temporary approach is needed to give the Department effective tools to respond more rapidly to the deteriorating water quality and quantity conditions in California's rivers and streams for 2015.

The following proposed criteria will be used to determine if an emergency fishing closure or associated reopening is warranted:

Any water of the state not currently listed in Section 8.00 of these regulations may be closed to fishing by the Department when the Director, or his or her designee, determines one or more of the following conditions have been met:

- Water temperatures in occupied habitat exceed 70° Fahrenheit for over eight hours a day for three consecutive days.

- Dissolved oxygen levels in occupied habitat drop below 5 mg/L for any period of time over three consecutive days.
- Fish passage is impeded or blocked for fish species that rely on migration as part of a life history trait.
- Water levels for ponds, lakes and reservoirs drop below 10% of their capacity.
- Adult breeding population levels are estimated to be below 500 individuals.

All waters closed pursuant to this section will be reopened by the Department when the Director, or his or her designee, determines all of the following conditions have been met:

- Water temperatures in occupied habitat do not exceed 70° Fahrenheit for over eight hours a day for seven consecutive days.
- Dissolved oxygen levels in occupied habitat rise above 5 mg/L and are maintained at that level for seven consecutive days.
- Fish passage is available and that no impediment exists to strand or concentrate adults or juveniles during their migration.
- Water levels for ponds, lakes and reservoirs have recovered to greater than 10% of their capacity.
- Adult breeding populations are estimated to be recovered to greater than 500 individuals.

Justification and associated data for closure and reopening decisions will be provided to the Commission for any water that is subject to a fishing closure.

The Department and the Commission will work together to formulate a regular rulemaking proposal that will refine the approach and regulatory language based on experiences learned, feedback from the public, and revisions to increase the efficacy of this emergency action.

Benefits: The proposed regulation will provide benefits to the environment through the conservation and preservation of listed species, species of special concern, and gamefish populations.

The proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations. The Legislature has delegated authority to the Commission to promulgate sport fishing regulations (sections 200, 202, 205, 240, and 315 Fish and Game Code).

Pursuant to its June 11, 2015 meeting in Mammoth Lakes, the Fish and Game Commission adopted the emergency action.

Regulatory Language

Section 8.01, Title 14, CCR is amended to read:

Section 8.01. Special Gear Provisions Measures for Fisheries at Risk due to Drought Conditions.

(a) In response to continued extreme drought conditions, the commission has established a quick response process to temporarily close fisheries experiencing degraded environmental conditions that may affect fish populations or their habitat within waters of the state. The criteria set forth in subsections (b) and (c) are intended to ensure that fisheries are protected under critical conditions stemming from the drought. These criteria will be monitored in statewide inland fisheries, and they will be evaluated on a water by water basis over time as conditions change.

(b) The department may close to angling any waters of the state not currently listed in Section 8.00 of these regulations if the director, or his or her designee, finds one or more of the following conditions have been met:

(A) Water temperatures in occupied habitat exceed 70° Fahrenheit for over eight hours a day for three consecutive days

(B) Dissolved oxygen levels in occupied habitat drop below 5 mg/L for any period of time over three consecutive days.

(C) Fish passage is impeded or blocked for fish species that rely on migration as part of a life history trait.

(D) Water levels for ponds, lakes and reservoirs drop below 10% of their capacity.

(E) Adult breeding population levels are estimated to be below 500 individuals.

(c) Waters closed pursuant to subsection (b) shall be reopened by the department when the director, or his or her designee, finds all of the following conditions have been met:

(A) Water temperatures in occupied habitat do not exceed 70° Fahrenheit over eight hours a day for seven consecutive days

(B) Dissolved oxygen levels in occupied habitat rise above 5 mg/L and are maintained at that level over seven consecutive days.

(C) Fish passage is available and no impediment exists to strand or concentrate adults or juveniles during their migration.

(D) Water levels for ponds, lakes and reservoirs have recovered to greater than 10% of their capacity.

(E) Adult breeding population levels are estimated to be recovered to greater than 500 individuals.

(d) It shall be unlawful to take fish in any waters of the state closed to angling pursuant to this Section.

(e) Notification of department actions.

(1) The department shall maintain a list of closed waters of the state and update that list on Wednesday of each week by 1:00 pm. In the event that water conditions change later in the week, the fishing status for each specific water will not change until the day following the next Wednesday. It shall be the responsibility of the angler to use the telephone number provided on the department's website to obtain the current status of any water. The number to call for information is (916) 445-7600.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 200, 202 ~~and 210~~, 205, 240, and 315, Fish and Game Code. Reference: Sections 200, 202, 205 ~~and 210~~, 240, and 315, Fish and Game Code.

**FISH AND GAME COMMISSION
STATEMENT OF EMERGENCY ACTION
FOR RE-ADOPTION OF EMERGENCY REGULATIONS**

Emergency Action to Re-adopt Section 8.01, Title 14, CCR,
Re: Fisheries at Risk

March 4, 2016

I. Request for Approval of Re-adoption of Emergency Regulations

In response to the continued extreme drought conditions, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is requesting that the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) extend the Department's authority set forth in Section 8.01, Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, to temporarily close fisheries that are experiencing rapidly degrading environmental conditions within waters of the state. The Department requests that the Commission readopt the emergency regulations that went into effect on July 2, 2015 for an additional period of 90 days while a Certificate of Compliance rulemaking is under consideration.

II. Emergency Regulation in Effect to Date

On January 17, 2014, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. proclaimed a State of Emergency to exist in California due to severe drought conditions. As part of the declaration, the Governor ordered the Department to work with the Commission, using the best available science, to determine whether restricting fishing in certain areas would become necessary and prudent as drought conditions persist.

Over the next several months, environmental conditions resulting from the drought requires temporary restrictions on fishing on parts of four rivers to protect fish populations and sustain future opportunity. The Department and the Commission determined that another approach was needed to give the Department more efficient tools to provide quicker response to deteriorating water quality and quantity conditions in California's waters. As a result, on June 11, 2015, the Commission adopted emergency regulations which established a process to temporarily close fisheries experiencing degraded environmental conditions that may affect fish populations or their habitat within waters of the state. The criteria set forth in these regulations are intended to ensure that fisheries are protected under critical conditions stemming from the drought.

Since adoption of the emergency regulations the Department has implemented one emergency fishing closure on state waters, of the lower Merced River, on August 18, 2015. The Department used the criteria established in subsection (b) of Section 8.01 to determine that a closure was warranted.

Following protocol, the Department held a public meeting in Merced prior to the fishing closure. In addition, the Department provided the Commission the biological data used to justify the closure and made the data available to the public on the Department's Emergency Fishing Closure webpage.

The Department and Commission are currently working together to formulate a regular rulemaking proposal that will refine the approach and associated language based on experience and feedback from the public, and with revisions to increase the efficacy of this emergency action.

III. Statement of Emergency

The hydrological conditions in 2015 deteriorated from the record low 2014 conditions. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) continues to evaluate and manage the changing impacts of drought on threatened and endangered species and species of special concern, and to develop contingency plans for state Wildlife Areas and Ecological Reserves to manage reduced water resources in the public interest.

Statewide water quality and quantity in many systems is likely to be inadequate to support fisheries until significant and sustained rain and snow accumulate, resulting in impeded passage of spawning fish, increased vulnerability to mortality from predation and physiological stress, and increased angling harvest and/or hooking mortality. Furthermore, survival of eggs and juvenile fish in these systems over the coming months is expected to be extremely low. The historically low water conditions will continue to concentrate coldwater fish populations into shrinking pools of cold water habitat making them easy prey for illegal angling methods such as snagging, increased hooking mortality due to legal catch and release, over-harvest, as well as other human-related disturbances within their freshwater habitat. When coupled with drought-related environmental stressors, such as high water temperature, low dissolved oxygen, and severely reduced suitable habitat, these stressors can seriously affect reproductive success and survival rates.

Since 2014, the Department has worked with the Commission using the best available science, to determine whether restricting fishing in certain areas will become necessary and prudent as drought conditions persist. The Department and Commission have determined that a temporary approach is needed to give the Department effective tools to respond more rapidly to deteriorating water quality and quantity conditions in California's waters for 2015 and early 2016.

V. Re-adoption Criteria

1) Same or Substantially Equivalent

Pursuant to Government Code Section 11346.1(h), the text of a re-adopted regulation must be the "same or substantially equivalent" to the text of the

original emergency regulation. The proposed language for the re-adopted regulatory amendment is the same as the language of the original emergency regulation.

(2) Substantial Progress

Government Code Section 11346.1(h) specifies that the emergency rulemaking agency must demonstrate that it is making “substantial progress and has proceeded with due diligence” to comply with the standard rulemaking provisions. The Commission, at its December 10, 2015 meeting was requested by the Department to authorize staff to file this emergency readopt, as well as file notice of its intent to file a Certificate of Compliance.

Work on the emergency standard has been conducted by DFW biologists to determine longer term impacts which necessitated filing the notice of the Commissions intent to file a Certificate of Compliance in December. Due to the statutory requirement for the Commission to hear the proposed Certificate of Compliance rulemaking at its February 11, 2016 and April 14, 2016 meetings, it is necessary for the Commission to request this first Emergency Readopt for a period of 90-days, followed by a second 90 day request which is proposed to be voted on at the Commission’s March 15, 2016 teleconference.