

**TITLE 14. Fish and Game Commission
Notice of Proposed Changes in Regulations**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Fish and Game Commission (Commission), pursuant to the authority vested by sections 200, 202, 205, 210, 220, 7090 and 8500 of the Fish and Game Code and to implement, interpret or make specific sections 200, 202, 205, 210, 220, 7090, 7850, 7857, 8140, 8250.5, 8254, 8284, 8500, 8603, 9000, 9001, 9010 and 9011, of said Code, proposes to amend Sections 29.17 and 127, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, relating to Kellet's Whelk (*Kelletia kelletii*) sport and commercial fisheries.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Under existing law, Kellet's whelk, *Kelletia kelletii*, may be taken for commercial purposes by hand collecting while diving 1,000 feet beyond the low tide mark of any natural or constructed shoreline (FGC Section 8140, Title 14, CCR §123) and incidentally in lobster and rock crab traps (FGC Sections 8250.5 and 8284). There are no size limits, seasons or catch quotas when fishing for Kellet's whelk by diving or trapping. There is a recreational bag limit of 35 whelk per day, the standard recreational bag limit for species for which there is not a bag limit otherwise established and whelks cannot be taken in any tidepool or the areas between the high tide mark and 1,000 feet seaward and lateral to the low tide mark (Title 14, CCR §29.05).

California Fish and Game Code Section 7090 requires the Commission, based upon the advice and recommendations of the Department, to encourage, manage, and regulate emerging fisheries. Consistent with the policies and criteria outlined in FGC §7090 and the Commission's Policy on Emerging Fisheries, the Department recommended the Commission designate the fishery for Kellet's whelk, as an emerging fishery. On April 7, 2011, based on the advice and input from the Department, a recommendation the Commission's Marine Resources Committee and public testimony the Commission designated the fishery for Kellet's whelk as an emerging fishery. The proposed regulations are designed to manage take in the fishery according to the guidelines set out by the California Marine Life Management Act.

The proposed regulations would manage take in the fishery through three possible mechanisms that can be implemented independently or concurrently: a season where take is prohibited; a total allowable catch (TAC); and a restriction on the method of take.

Option 1: Season where take is prohibited

The proposed regulations would create a seasonal closure from [March 1 – May 1] through [May 31 – July 31] that would prohibit the commercial and recreational take of Kellet's whelk during that time period.

Option 2: Total Allowable Catch

The proposed regulations would create a total allowable catch (TAC) to cap the commercial landings of Kellet's whelk from the period from April 1 through March 31 of the following year. The TAC is proposed to be set at [86,000 to 173,000 pounds] which is based most conservatively on 50% of the most recent five year average landings and least conservatively on 100% of the most recent five year average landings.

When the TAC is met, or expected to be met based on anticipated landings, the fishery will be closed. The Department shall give not less than ten days' notice of the fishery closure to all holders of a current and valid lobster operator permit or southern rock crab trap as well as any other individual who has landed Kellet's whelk within the previous five years via a notification letter, and to the public and Commission via a news release.

Option 3: Prohibit Commercial Take of Kellet's whelk by Diving

The proposed regulations would prohibit the commercial taking of Kellet's whelk by diving. Unlike the take of whelk incidentally in lobster and rock crab traps, there are no limits on the number of individuals who can take Kellet's whelk by diving. Prohibiting diving for Kellet's whelk would help prevent the unrestricted growth of individuals participating in the fishery.

NOTICE IS GIVEN that any person interested may present statements, orally or in writing, relevant to this action at a hearing to be held at the Veteran's Memorial Building, 112 West Cabrillo Blvd., Santa Barbara,

California, on Thursday, November 17, 2011, at 8:30 a.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that any person interested may present statements, orally or in writing, relevant to this action at a hearing to be held in the Hubbs Sea World Research Institute, Shedd Auditorium, 2595 Ingraham Street, San Diego, California, on Thursday, December 15, 2011, at 8:30 a.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard. It is requested, but not required, that written comments be submitted on or before December 12, 2011 at the address given below, or by fax at (916) 653-5040, or by e-mail to FGC@fgc.ca.gov. Written comments mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the Commission office, must be received before 5:00 p.m. on December 12, 2011. All comments must be received no later than December 15, 2011, at the hearing in Sacramento, CA. If you would like copies of any modifications to this proposal, please include your name and mailing address.

The regulations as proposed in strikeout-underline format, as well as an initial statement of reasons, including environmental considerations and all information upon which the proposal is based (rulemaking file), are on file and available for public review from the agency representative, Jon K. Fischer, Acting Executive Director, Fish and Game Commission, 1416 Ninth Street, Box 944209, Sacramento, California 94244-2090, phone (916) 653-4899. Please direct requests for the above mentioned documents and inquiries concerning the regulatory process to Jon K. Fischer or Jon Snellstrom at the preceding address or phone number. **Dr. Craig Shuman, Fish and Game Commission, (310) 869-6574, has been designated to respond to questions on the substance of the proposed regulations.** Copies of the Initial Statement of Reasons, including the regulatory language, may be obtained from the address above. Notice of the proposed action shall be posted on the Fish and Game Commission website at <http://www.fgc.ca.gov>.

Availability of Modified Text

If the regulations adopted by the Commission differ from but are sufficiently related to the action proposed, they will be available to the public for at least 15 days prior to the date of adoption. Circumstances beyond the control of the Commission (e.g., timing of Federal regulation adoption, timing of resource data collection, timelines do not allow, etc.) or changes made to be responsive to public recommendation and comments during the regulatory process may preclude full compliance with the 15-day comment period, and the Commission will exercise its powers under Section 202 of the Fish and Game Code. Regulations adopted pursuant to this section are not subject to the time periods for adoption, amendment or repeal of regulations prescribed in Sections 11343.4, 11346.4 and 11346.8 of the Government Code. Any person interested may obtain a copy of said regulations prior to the date of adoption by contacting the agency representative named herein.

If the regulatory proposal is adopted, the final statement of reasons may be obtained from the address above when it has been received from the agency program staff.

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 initial 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:

Option 1: Season where take is prohibited

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.

Implementation of a season where take is prohibited would allow individuals to continue to catch and sell Kellet's whelk during other parts of the year. As the majority of Kellet's whelk are caught incidentally in lobster and crab traps, this species does not make up the primary part of any individuals income. Any revenue lost during the closed season could be regained by additional effort during the open season. In addition, the implementation of a closed season may result in a price premium at certain times of the year during the open season, providing a possible positive economic

impact. Finally, any short-term negative economic impacts are expected to be offset by the anticipated positive long-term economic returns that will result from a sustainable fishery.

Option 2: Total Allowable Catch

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.

A reduction in total annual catch would have a corresponding reduction in revenue. However, relative to other fisheries, the volume and value of Kellet's whelk are extremely low so the total estimated statewide economic impact is expected to be insignificant. In addition, any short-term negative economic impacts are expected to be offset by the anticipated positive long-term economic returns that will result from a sustainable fishery.

Option 3: Prohibit Commercial Take of Kellet's Whelk by Diving

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.

In 2010, diving accounted for less than 1% of the total catch of Kellet's whelk, with a corresponding ex-vessel value of approximately \$1000. There are a very small number of individuals engaged in the dive fishery for Kellet's whelk (seven in 2010) so it is expected that a prohibition of diving would not have a significant economic impact.

- (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:

None

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

The agency is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action.

- (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

Effect on Small Business

It has been determined that the adoption of these regulations may affect small business. The Commission has drafted the regulations in Plain English pursuant to Government Code sections 11342.580 and 11346.2(a)(1).

Consideration of Alternatives

The Commission must determine that no reasonable alternative considered by the Commission, or that has otherwise been identified and brought to the attention of the Commission, would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the action is proposed or would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the proposed action.

FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

Dated: October 18, 2011

Jon K. Fischer
Deputy Executive Director