

**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 Section(s) 200, 202, 203, 355, 710, 710.5, 710.7, 713, 1002, 1050, 1053, 1526, 1528, 1530, 1580, 1581, 1583, 1585, 1587, 1761, 1745, 1764, 1765, 1907, 2118, 2120, 2122, 2150, 2150.2, 2157, 2190, 3004.5, 3031, and 10504 of the Fish and Game Code and to implement, interpret or make specific Section(s) 355, 711, 713, 1050, 1053, 1055.3, 1526, 1528, 1530, 1580, 1581, 1582, 1583, 1584, 1585, 1590, 1591, 1764, 1745, 1756, 1765, 2006, 2116, 2116.5, 2117, 2118, 2120, 2125, 2150, 2150.2, 2151, 2157, 2190, 2193, 2271, 3004.5, 8314, 10504, 12000, and 12002, 12002.5 of said Code, proposes to amend Sections 550, 550.5, 551, 552, 630 and 702, and repeal Subsections 703(a)(2) and 703(c), Title 14, California Code of Regulations, relating to Department of Fish and Wildlife Lands Pass Program and Lands Public Uses.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

The Current Lands Pass Program

The majority of lands managed by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) are designated as wildlife areas or ecological reserves. Current regulations for the public use of Department lands include an entry pass program (“the Lands Pass Program”) for visitors to certain wildlife areas and ecological reserves who do not possess a hunting, fishing or trapping license. This program was established by the Native Species Conservation and Enhancement Act of 1988 (Fish and Game Code (FGC) Sections 1750-1772).

The current Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR) regulations that address this program include:

- 550(c): This section discusses passes and entry permits for department lands in general. It does not distinguish between passes for hunting and Lands Passes. It explains that for properties that require a fee for entry, each visitor must purchase a pass and exchange that pass for an entry permit.
- 550.5(c): This section provides more detailed information about obtaining passes and entry permits and:
 - 550.5(c)(6) specifically explains that a daily or annual “wildlife viewing” pass (referred to as a Lands Pass in other Department publications) and an entry permit are required to enter properties listed in subsections 551(w) and 630(c). It also explains how the price of these passes is adjusted each year, and that visitors who present a valid hunting, fishing or trapping license are exempt from purchasing a daily or annual pass.
 - 550.5(c)(6) does not include the requirement in FGC section 1764 and 1765 that all visitors under the age of 16 are exempt from the pass requirement and that organized school and youth groups are exempt from the pass requirement.

For 2016, a daily Lands Pass costs \$4.00 and an annual Lands Pass costs \$22.50. The passes may be purchased online, from department license offices or authorized license agents through the Automated License Data System (ALDS). Like other permits or licenses sold by the

Department, the price is adjusted annually according to Section 699, Title 14, CCR. Generally speaking, the price of Lands Passes increases by roughly two percent each year.

Five wildlife areas and two ecological reserves currently participate in the Lands Pass Program. They are:

- Gray Lodge Wildlife Area
- Grizzly Island Wildlife Area
- Los Banos Wildlife Area
- Imperial Wildlife Area
- San Jacinto Wildlife Area
- Elkhorn Slough Ecological Reserve
- Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve

Purpose of Amendments to Regulations Regarding the Lands Pass Program:

The Legislature has recognized that the Department does not receive adequate revenue to manage the fish and wildlife resources of the State (FGC Section 710). Voluntary programs, such as a Native Species Stamp, were initiated with a concerted campaign in the late 1980's and early 1990's in compliance with FGC sections 1763, 1766 and 1769. These programs were unsuccessful in generating sufficient revenue to cover their costs. The Legislature also directed that the segment of the public that uses Department lands, but does not support them through the purchase of hunting, fishing or trapping licenses, should provide support through purchase of Lands Passes for the use of designated properties (FGC sections 1745, 1764 and 1765).

By expanding the number of wildlife areas and ecological reserves that participate in the Lands Pass Program, the Department may receive additional funds to manage wildlife areas and ecological reserves. One aspect of the Lands Pass Program that has been impractical to implement, particularly since the adoption of the ALDS as the means for selling passes, is the requirement that Lands Passes be exchanged for an entry permit. This is due to the lack of staff available to exchange Lands Passes for entry permits.

If the proposed regulations are adopted, the following changes will be made to the Lands Pass Program through amendments to Sections 550, 550.5, 551, 630 and 702, Title 14, CCR:

1. The Lands Pass Program will no longer require visitors to exchange their Lands Pass for an entry permit. This requires amendments to sections 550 and 550.5 to more clearly distinguish between passes issued for hunting, which are exchanged for entry permits, and Lands Passes which are not exchanged for entry permits.
2. In Section 551, the following 28 wildlife areas will be added to the Lands Pass Program:

Ash Creek Wildlife Area
Bass Hill Wildlife Area
Battle Creek Wildlife Area
Butte Valley Wildlife Area
Cache Creek Wildlife Area
Crescent City Marsh Wildlife Area

Eel River Wildlife Area
Elk Creek Wetlands Wildlife Area
Elk River Wildlife Area
Fay Slough Wildlife Area
Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area
Honey Lake Wildlife Area

Hope Valley Wildlife Area
Horseshoe Ranch Wildlife Area
Lake Earl Wildlife Area
Mad River Slough Wildlife Area
Mendota Wildlife Area
Mouth of Cottonwood Creek Wildlife Area
Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area
North Grasslands Wildlife Area

San Felipe Valley Wildlife Area
Shasta Valley Wildlife Area
South Spit Wildlife Area
Tehama Wildlife Area
Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area
Volta Wildlife Area
Willow Creek Wildlife Area
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

3. In Section 630, the following eight areas will be added to the Lands Pass Program:

Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve	Canebrake Ecological Reserve
Boden Canyon Ecological Reserve	North Table Mountain Ecological Reserve
Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve	San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve
Buena Vista Lagoon Ecological Reserve	Woodbridge Ecological Reserve

Purpose of Amendments to Other Wildlife Area and Ecological Reserve Title 14, CCR, Regulations:

1. Three site-specific regulations that were inadvertently omitted when the land regulations were reorganized in 2014 will be re-entered into Section 551. The restrictions have been kept in place on a temporary basis under the authority of the Regional Manager for the subject areas. These regulations prohibit horses on the Battle Creek and Mouth of Cottonwood Creek Wildlife Areas, and prohibit non-hunting visitors from entering Shasta Valley Wildlife Area on shoot days during the waterfowl season.
2. Various changes are proposed in Section 552 for the National Wildlife Refuges that are also designated as state wildlife areas. These changes are proposed in order to improve the consistency of the state regulations with federal regulations for these refuges and were requested by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
3. Pursuant to FGC Section 3031, the age limit for people participating as junior hunters on Department lands increased from 15 years old, to persons who are under 18 years of age as of July 1 of the licensing year. This necessitated changes to wording to subsections of Section 550.5 that formerly did not include 16, 17 and 18 year olds as junior hunters. The end result in terms of the numbers of adults and younger people who can be included in a hunting party or assigned to designated hunting zone, blind or pond is the same as with the existing regulations. The change in the age limit for junior hunters also necessitated adding language that 16 and 17 year olds who hunt without adult supervision may not be accompanied by visitors under 16 years of age.
4. Pursuant to FGC Section 3004.5, Section 550 was amended to require hunters to use ammunition consistent with Section 250.1, Title 14, CCR, (i.e., nonlead ammunition) when hunting on Department lands.
5. In Section 551, archery will be added as a method of take for the special wild pig hunt at

the Joice Island Unit of the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area and all legal methods of take for big game will be allowed for the special tule elk hunt on that wildlife area. Visitors will also be allowed to resume off-highway vehicles on roads open to motor vehicles on the Tehama Wildlife Area.

6. Also in Section 551, the Green Island Unit of the Napa-Sonoma Marsh Wildlife Area will be opened for public use. This property was closed because it was the site of extensive, multi-phased habitat restoration projects, which are now complete. Opening the unit to public use is consistent with the management plan for the Wildlife Area.
7. FGC Section 1587 will be implemented by adding language to Section 630, Title 14, CCR, stating that the Mirage Trail on the Magnesia Springs Ecological Reserve is open for hiking from May 1 through January 31.
8. Subsection 703(a)(2) will be deleted. The fees for Special Use Permits will be relocated to Section 702, and the title of Section 702 will be amended to reflect that it includes fees for a variety of public uses on Department lands.
9. Subsections 702(d) and 703(c), which repeat the language in existing Section 699, are proposed for deletion to reduce duplicative regulations.
10. Additional minor editorial changes are also proposed to improve the clarity and consistency of the regulations, improve enforceability, correct typographical errors, and align regulatory language.

Benefits of the Regulations:

The addition of 36 properties to the Lands Pass Program may result in additional funds available for the management of wildlife areas and ecological reserves under the jurisdiction of the Department. The Lands Pass Program will be more practical to implement by discontinuing the requirement to obtain an entry permit in exchange for a daily Lands Pass or the presentation of an annual Lands Pass. The state regulations for public use of National Wildlife Refuges that are also designated as state wildlife areas will be consistent with federal regulations. Environmental quality is expected to benefit as a result of compliance with Section 250.1, Title 14, CCR, which prohibits the use of lead ammunition for hunting on Department lands.

Consistency with State Regulations

The Commission has conducted a search of the California Code of Regulations and has concluded that the proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing State regulations.

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 Bakersfield Elks Lodge #266, 1616 30th Street, in Bakersfield California, on June 23, 2016, at 8:00 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 at the Lake Natoma Inn Hotel &

Conference Center, 702 Gold Lake Drive, in Folsom, California, on August 25, 2016, at 8:00 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 August 11, 2016 at the address given below, or by email to FGC@fgc.ca.gov. Written comments mailed, or emailed to the Commission office, must be received before 12:00 noon on August 19, 2016. All comments must be received no later than August 25, at the hearing in Folsom, California. 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, Michael Yaun, 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 Michael Yaun or Caren Woodson at the preceding address or phone number. Julie Horenstein, Department of Fish and Wildlife, phone 916-324-3772, has been designated to respond to questions on the substance of the proposed regulations. Copies of the Initial Statement of Reasons, the regulatory language, the Notice, and other rulemaking documents may be obtained from the address above or from 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/Results of the Economic Impact Assessment

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 Business, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States:

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 because the proposed changes do not add or remove any existing public uses.

- (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:

Because the proposed regulations will not change existing activities on Department lands, the Commission does not anticipate any impact on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state, the creation or elimination of new or existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California. The proposed regulations will not affect the health and welfare of California residents or worker safety. The proposed changes may have a beneficial effect on the State's environment by removing lead ammunition from Department lands.

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

Visitors to the properties listed in proposed subsections 551(w) and 630(c), Title 14, CCR, would be required to purchase a daily or annual Lands Pass. The price of Lands Passes and annual adjustments are included in FGC Section 1765. The costs of 2016 Lands Passes are as follows:

1. Daily Lands Pass	\$4.00
2. Annual Lands Pass	\$22.50

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

The Department will have some start-up and ongoing costs in expanding the number of properties that participate in the Lands Pass Program. However the existing fees will recover those costs. Any revenue exceeding the Lands Pass Program costs is to augment ongoing property management costs.

- (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, would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the proposed action, or would be more cost effective to affected private persons and equally effective in implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law.

FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

Dated: **4/26/2016**

Michael Yaun
Acting Executive Director