

California Fishing License: Two More States Adopt 12-Month System

Parimal M. Rohit, February 15, 2018

Kansas and Nevada switch over to calendar-based licenses less than six months after SB 187's failure.

STATEWIDE — California has often thumped its chest as being a trendsetting state, the notion being concepts and ideas originating here eventually becoming the norm everywhere else within a matter of months or years. The Golden State, however, appears to be behind the eight ball when it comes to adopting a 12-month system for fishing licenses.

[The Log covered this topic a few times in 2017.](#) Our most recent coverage cited a legislative analysis of Senate Bill 187 (SB 187), where the apparent lack of success of a 12-month fishing license policy in three southern states (Alabama, Georgia and Virginia) was partial justification for not pursuing a similar system in California.

Georgia, for example, suffered a 31 percent drop in fishing license sales after the 12-month policy was enacted. "The Assembly's legislative analysts relied upon these three states as examples of what could happen if California enacted and implemented as 12-month fishing license," a Standing Watch article on this topic, published in *The Log's* Nov. 3, 2017 issue, stated. "A 31 percent drop in fishing license sales in California, hypothetically speaking, would result in 332,000 fewer fishing licenses sold in the state – resulting in a \$14.8 million loss in revenue – according to the legislative analysis."

We noted how the legislative analysis did not factor in the states where a 12-month fishing license was successful – focusing only on what could go wrong and never mentioning the upside of enacting such a policy.

Two more states, interestingly enough, have, within weeks of *The Log's* coverage, adopted a 12-month fishing license scheme. Those states are Kansas and Nevada. Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Utah also have 12-month fishing licenses available for anglers.

Roughly one-dozen states have adopted a licensing plan to allow anyone fishing within its borders to do so for 365 consecutive days – trendsetting California is not one of them.

Angling advocates, naturally, have used the state's inaction on fishing license policy to explain why the number of people dropping baited lines into the water has consistently declined since 1980.

A State Senate legislative analysis, coincidentally, did acknowledge California's current calendar based fishing license system could be a reason for dwindling angling participation, but added the addition of Marine Protected Areas up and down the Pacific Coast might also be a factor.

The fact still remains a California fishing license will expire on Dec. 31, regardless of when it was purchased. We're a little more than 30 days into 2018 but anyone in California who buys a fishing license will have paid the same amount as someone else who made a similar purchase at the beginning of the year – and both licenses will expire on the same day.

Meanwhile [a column featured in Las Vegas Review-Journal](#) (posted online Jan. 10) stated Nevada's new 365-day fishing license streamlines how the Silver State conducts business with anglers.

"Creation of these 365-day licenses is part of what the Nevada Department of Wildlife calls license simplification," C. Douglas Nielsen wrote in his *Daily Journal* column.

Kansas, just the same, enacted its 12-month fishing license scheme as part of "an effort to better serve license buyers," the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism stated on its website. The 12-month fishing license option was offered to anglers and others at no additional cost.

So the question still remains whether California would move forward with a proposal with no known or formal opposition, especially when other states appear to be getting on the 12-month fishing license bandwagon. There is still some hope in the form of Assembly Bill 986 (AB 986), which Assembly members approved in late January. The bill proposes to adopt a 12-month fishing license for veterans – though it is interesting to see a limited proposal move through the legislature only 4 months after the broader plan failed to make it to the governor's desk. Perhaps AB 986, which is currently in the State Senate, could be a gateway to eventually transition to a 12-month fishing license for all?

TAKE ACTION

SB 187 might have been shot down in September 2017 but it's not too late to still chime in on the merits of a 12-month fishing license for California anglers. AB 986 (introduced by Assembly member James Gallagher last year) is actively being considered by State Senators. Meanwhile SB 187 is now revisited as Senate Bill 518. Reaching out to the following policymakers and lobbyists could make all the difference in the world.

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