



California lawmakers revisit attempts to increase fishing activity

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SACRAMENTO — Sportfishing activity in California is on the verge of a “death spiral,” a 2016 study proclaimed. The study, published by the **California Sportfishing League**, coincided with legislative efforts to reform fishing policy and spur angling participation in the nation’s most populous state. Those efforts, though, fell short.

State legislators hope for a different result in 2017 as lawmakers proposed separate bills to make fishing licenses easier to obtain or purchase. Senate Bill 187 (SB 187), introduced by State Sen. Tom Berryhill (R-Twain Harte) in late January, proposes to make fishing permits valid for a full 12 months from the date they are purchased. Fishing permits are currently valid for a calendar year, meaning they expire on Dec. 31 regardless of purchase date.

Meanwhile Assembly member Marie Waldron (R-Escondido) proposed making fishing licenses free to anyone who is not an adult. Assembly Bill 478 (AB 478) specifically increases the minimum age to buy a fishing license to 18; current law requires anyone age 16 or older to purchase and be in possession of a state-issued fishing license.

Fishing license sales in California have reportedly been declining in recent years. California Sportfishing League, in its state of the industry study last

year, said fishing license sales statewide have dropped by 55 percent since 1980, despite a 60 percent increase in residents across California in that same time.

Berryhill hoped to address the state's dwindling fishing participation numbers in 2015, when he introduced Senate Bill 345 (SB 345). The bill, like SB 187, pushed for California to ditch the calendar system of issuing fishing licenses and instead grant the permits on a 12-month basis. SB 345 also proposed making junior fishing licenses available to teenagers for a base price of \$15.

Unlike SB 345 (known as the Sportfishing Stimulus Act of 2015), SB 187 and AB 478 would allow anyone under the age of 18 to fish without having to pay for a license.

California Sportfishing League issued an action request to its supporters in early March, urging them to sign a petition in support of SB 187 and AB 478. The action request stated the SB 187/AB 478 package would also prevent local agencies from "passing illegal fishing restrictions, like pier fishing ban." Both bills are currently in committee.

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