

## Bill aims to boost lagging fishing license sales

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A bill in the state Legislature would change the period when fishing licenses are valid. Wochit

Under a bill in the state Legislature, anglers in California could purchase fishing licenses that are good for 12 months from the date of purchase.

Unless people buy a license on Jan. 1, that isn't the way it works now.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife currently charges \$47.01 for a license that is valid from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31. But a license costs the same whether it is sold in January or October. And it is still only valid until the end of the year.

Under Senate Bill 187, the department would sell licenses that are valid for 12 months, no matter when they are purchased.

"California's costly and antiquated fishing license program is a contributing factor to an alarming decline in fishing participation rates," said Marko Mlikotin, executive director of the California Sportfishing League.

The Sportfishing League supported a similar bill in 2015. That bill was approved in the state Senate, but died in the Assembly. However, the bill proposed in 2015 would have also lowered the price of licenses to \$42.50 and raised the age when a license is required from 16 to 18.

This year's bill would only change the dates when licenses are valid.

Bob Braz, who owns The Fishen Hole bait shop in Shasta Lake, said he has heard complaints from anglers about the January to December licenses for many years.

Braz said the state should change the way it sells licenses, making them valid for 12 months.

"I personally couldn't see how it wouldn't sell more licenses," Braz said.

Department of Fish and Wildlife spokesman Andrew Hughan said the agency does not take a position on pending legislation. He also said he could not comment on the bill.

According to department figures, less than 20 percent of California residents who buy an annual license are getting 12 months of fishing in when they buy a permit.

The state sold a little over 1 million annual resident fishing licenses in 2016. By Jan. 31 of this year the state had sold 179,395, according to the state. The number of all fishing licenses sold annually has been on a downward trend since the 1980s. In 1981 the state sold about 2.3 million annual resident fishing licenses.

Mlikotin blamed the drop in license sales on a number of factors, including cost, charging minors for a license and calendar-year sales.

“Fishing license sales have been in a death spiral. They’ve been in decline for years,” he said.

Even at the current price, Braz said he felt licenses were still a good deal.

“Even though you have to pay (\$47.01) you got thousands of places to go,” he said.

Michael Buchannan and Jerry Edmonds found a place to go fishing Tuesday. The two Redding men stood on the rocky shore of Lake Shasta under a drizzling sky trying to catch a big lunker.

Both said they would like to see the law changed allowing the state to sell licenses for 12 months.

“If you buy a license in June, it’s over in what, seven months?” Buchannan said.

“It kinda keeps people from buying (a license) at the end of the year,” Edmonds said.

<http://www.redding.com/story/news/2017/03/07/bill-aims-boost-lagging-fishing-license-sales/98833650/>