



PRESS RELEASE

State Legislation Targets State's Decline in Fishing Participation

California's costly, antiquated licensing program threatens outdoor tourism, jobs

April 7, 2015 (Sacramento, CA): Today, California's leading advocate for salt- and freshwater recreational anglers, the California Sportfishing League (CSL), announced the introduction of a CSL-sponsored bill that will begin to address California's unprecedented decline in recreational fishing participation, and help protect communities dependent on outdoor recreation for tourism and jobs.

The Sportfishing Stimulus Act of 2015 ([SB 345](#)), authored by [Senator Tom Berryhill](#) (R-Twain Harte), provides common sense solutions to address California's declining fishing participation rate, which currently ranks last in the nation.

[According to a study recently released by CSL](#), annual fishing license sales have declined by more than 55% since 1980, while California's population has increased by nearly 60%. Underscoring the importance of a legislative solution, the state could experience another 47% drop in fishing licenses over the next 10-15 years if the current trend continues. This further decline could have a profound impact on the State's tourism industry and communities dependent on recreational fishing for economic activity and jobs.

"Sportfishing, one of California's greatest pastimes, is facing a real crisis," said State Senator Tom Berryhill. "A dramatic decline in fishing participation demonstrates that the state's current licensing system has proven too costly for many families. Providing anglers with a greater bang for their buck is the first step to making sure that recreational fishing is accessible and affordable, much to the benefit of communities dependent on recreational fishing for tourism and jobs, as well as funding for important habitat restoration and fisheries management."

The legislation includes several provisions, including one that will increase the value of California's antiquated fish license system by changing the term of the State's annual license to a full 12 months, rather than a license that expires at the end of the calendar year, no matter when the license is purchased.

"The decline in the state's fishing participation rate reflects the fact that California fishing licenses are among the costliest in the country and, remarkably, are not valid for a full 12 months," said David Dickerson, CSL's Board President. "If a resident's car registration is valid for a full 12 months, then fishing licenses should be too. Senator Berryhill, a champion of California's sportsmen, has introduced common sense solutions to protect the future of recreational fishing."

If passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown, the bill would:

- Make an annual fishing license valid for a full 12 months, rather than just the calendar year.
- Create a junior fishing license at a reduced base price of \$8.25 (not including special permits), similar to the state's junior hunting license.
- Allow charitable organizations to use fish caught by anglers for charitable and organizational functions, and not subject the charities to fines if an event exceeds possession limits.

To learn more about the Sportfishing Stimulus Act, please see the bill's [Fact Sheet](#).

Those concerned with protecting recreational fishing and jobs can help build political support for SB 345 by sending a letter to Senator Tom Berryhill at State Capitol, Room 3076, Sacramento, CA 95814-4900, and copy their State Senator and Assembly Member.

Key Fishing Facts

On March 23, 2015, CSL [released a study](#) that found that the high cost of purchasing an annual recreational fishing license has proven to be a formidable barrier to access and has contributed to an unprecedented decline in recreational fishing.

Economic Value

- There are roughly 1.7 million recreational anglers in California, contributing over \$4.9 billion annually in economic activity. In comparison to commercial fishing, which provides roughly \$1.7 billion in annual economic benefits, recreational fishing is a major source of outdoor tourism, jobs and tax revenue for all 58 counties.

Unprecedented Decline in Participation

- California's fishing participation rate is ranked dead last in the United States despite having one of the longest coastlines in the U.S., over 4,000 lakes/reservoirs and thousands of rivers and streams.
- Since 1980, when annual licenses were sold for as little as \$5.00, California's annual fishing license sales have dropped by more than 55% ([1980](#): 2.26 million; [2014](#): 990k), while our state's population has increased by nearly 60%. In 2014, 40,000 fewer annual fishing licenses were sold compared to 2013.
- If the 35-year trend remains constant, annual fishing license sales could fall below 500,000 by 2027, or another 49% over the next 12 years. Should this occur, between 1980 and 2027, annual license sales will have dropped 78%. This

downward trend could accelerate if fees are increased substantially, or new regulations are imposed that increase costs or barriers to fishing.

Antiquated Licensing System

- California operates under an antiquated calendar system, whereby licenses expire on December 31st of every year, regardless of when purchased. This system discourages anglers from purchasing a license that is not valid a full 12 months.
- California does not provide a junior fishing license. According to the American Sportfishing Association, 71% of anglers first started fishing when they were under 18 years of age, underscoring the importance of removing costly barriers to entry for young anglers.

Too Costly to Fish in California

- California offers the 2nd highest fresh/saltwater annual fishing license in the U.S. What once sold for \$5 in 1980, costs \$47.01 today, not including permits that could increase the cost to more than \$120 a year.
- California's "annual" base residential license of \$47.01 is 66% above the average fishing license cost of all coastal states (\$28.30) and 76% above the average fishing license cost for all states (\$26.73), not including additional permits.

Founded in 2014, the California Sportfishing League (CSL) is a nonprofit coalition of fresh and saltwater anglers, and small business owners devoted to protecting access to recreational fishing. To learn more visit www.SportfishingConservation.org or [@CASportfishing](https://www.facebook.com/CASportfishingLeague), or LIKE on [facebook.com/CASportfishingLeague](https://www.facebook.com/CASportfishingLeague)

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