



PRESS RELEASE

Independent Analysis Makes Case for Fishing License Reforms

12-Month Fishing Legislation Pending in California State Legislature

June 21, 2018 (Sacramento, CA): Today, the California Sportfishing League released independent analysis that reveals that California's costly fishing license is likely a major contributor to the state's declining fishing participation rate and is economically unsustainable for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In recent years, more and more states are responding to the needs of anglers by transitioning from a calendar-based license to a 12-month license and employing new marketing techniques to recruit, retain and re-activate (R3) anglers. Southwick Associates is the first marketing and economic research firm to examine whether calendar or 12-month fishing states have experienced greater growth in sales and revenue. This question is timely given the 12-month fishing license legislation pending in the California State Legislature.

"Independent analysis reveals that California's costly fishing license is in a death-spiral," said Marko Mlikotin, executive director of the California Sportfishing League. "Despite California's abundant natural resources and growth in population, it has lost over one million anglers over the last 30-years. Given this alarming trend, it is time for California to abandon its costly and antiquated fishing license program for one that aims to increase fishing participation rates and boost outdoor tourism."

Given that calendar-based licenses expire on December 31st of each year, California anglers have long complained that there are few incentives for them to purchase an annual license during the spring and summer months when outdoor activity increases, especially one that costs 110% over the national average. States that have experienced greater growth in sales and revenue have developed license programs, such as 12-month licenses, to give short-term license holders (fair weather anglers) incentives to buy more-costly annual licenses that they perceive to have greater value.

"Considering California's declining license sales and revenue situation, current fisheries management efforts are not economically sustainable," said Rob Southwick, principle of Southwick and Associates. "To maintain adequate conservation funding, some level of changes are needed to the State's license structure, pricing and/or marketing approaches."

Southwick Associates' key findings and recommendations include:

1. Today, there are 1 million fewer anglers than there were in 1985. Yet, despite annual price increases, the DFW's total license revenues have not kept up with inflation, with price hikes aggravating the decline in participation. The current revenue situation does not appear to be sustainable. Significant changes will be needed to enhance revenues, ranging from re-assessing current prices, working with consumers to identify new types of licenses customers would prefer and initiating marketing efforts to boost license sales and renewal rates.
2. The new 12-month license will not regain lost license customers and revenue but could help reverse the decline. Florida was the first state to switch to a 12-month license starting in 1991. Today, there are 14 states with a 12-month license.
3. It's more than prices or term of licenses that determine if sales increase or decrease. Many factors combine to determine the direction of license sales such as weather, access issues, cultural interest in the outdoors, and more. However, states that have a 12-month license since 2006 have seen revenues grow faster than other states.
4. For states with a 12-month license, a greater percentage of license sales are of higher-priced annual licenses versus short-term licenses. This results from basic economics, and would be expected in California, too.
5. Several states now provide license auto-renewal options that further boost revenues and reduce the revenue gap between a customer's license expiration date and their next license purchase.
6. Many states are seeing significant success in boosting revenues through active efforts to recruit, retain and re-activate (R3) anglers. Simple reminders aimed at current and prospective anglers to plan fishing trips, to renew licenses and to take a friend or family member fishing are just a few of the many marketing efforts that need to be engaged.
7. California is strongly cautioned against raising license prices without first assessing the impacts on participation and revenues. Licenses may already be over-priced and lower prices may actually boost revenues for some licenses. Eliminating the forced inflation-based price hikes in favor of a statistical assessment that determines optimal prices based on California's actual license sales drivers and consumer demand will help boost revenues.

The California State Legislature is considering two bills that would transition California from a calendar-based license to a 12-month license; Senate Bill 518 (formerly SB 187) authored by Senator Tom Berryhill and Assembly Bill 986, authored by Assemblyman James Gallagher. Both bills will be considered in the week of Monday, June 25th. They enjoyed [broad based support](#) from organizations representing sportfishing, recreational boating, marina operators, small business, retail, and the tourism and hospitality industry. In addition, over 3,000 California anglers signed an online petition in favor of the bills.

To review the Southwick and Associates analysis, “Considerations Regarding 365-Day Fishing Licenses,” visit <http://www.savefishing.com/news-2/>.

The California Sportfishing League (CSL) is a nonprofit coalition of recreational anglers, and small business owners devoted to protecting access to recreational fishing. California’s 2.6 million recreational anglers contribute over \$4.6 billion annually to California’s economy, a major contributor to outdoor tourism and jobs.

To learn more visit www.savefishing.com or Twitter [@CASportfishing](https://twitter.com/CASportfishing)

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