

FishRap: California Budget Depletes Lifetime License Trust Account

July 12, 2017, Parimal Rohit

SACRAMENTO — Anglers were dealt a blow in late June, as Gov. Jerry Brown signed off a state budget calling for depletion of the Lifetime License Trust Account. The account is part of California's Fish and Game Preservation Fund (FGPF) and, according to the state, collects funds to preserve and protect fish and game resources.

Brown officially signed off on the \$183.2 billion budget a couple days ahead of the annual June 30 deadline, meaning California avoided a possible government shutdown yet again. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) received about \$29 million less this year, receiving \$533 million (compared to \$562 million for 2016-17).

A bulk of the funding – almost \$237 million – was distributed to the department's Biodiversity Conservation Program.

About \$88 million would be set aside for enforcement (down from \$90 million last year) while the Fish and Game Commission's line item is about \$1.5 million.

The budget cuts raised questions of what future slashes could mean for the department when it's time to approve next year's budget.

California's Division of Boating and Waterways, which is part of the state's DPR, will receive about \$29.3 million for 2017-18; DPR, as a whole, was allocated nearly \$846.5 million.

Protecting marine life from future droughts was also incorporated into the 2017-18 state budget. DFW will receive \$2.6 million from the General Fund, according to state documents, "to sustain resilient systems for protection of fish and wildlife affected by future drought and climate change."

"During the recent drought, significant investments have been made to ensure that the state is better prepared to mitigate the harmful effects of future droughts on fish and wildlife resources," California's official budget summary stated. "These resiliency measures include installation of filtration equipment at fish hatcheries, improved water use efficiency at wildlife areas, and a network of fish and wildlife monitoring systems throughout the state."

The state's budget also adds another \$1.1 million to the DFW budget to provide expanded legal and scientific expertise.

"Voluntary efforts are needed to integrate watershed restoration projects with updated river flow regimes to help salmon and other fisheries thrive. Agreements would describe additional water flows and habitat restoration and other measures in the major rivers that flow to the Delta," the official budget summary stated.

Natural resources departments, in all, will receive \$5.2 billion in funding during the 2017-18 fiscal year, with 11.9 percent of that amount allocated to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and another 7.2 percent slice of the pie cut for DFW.

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