

## Capitol Tracker: 365-day fishing license bill to be addressed again next session

Wood pulls proposal to incorporate ideas from stakeholder groups

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A bill proposed by North Coast Assemblyman Jim Wood that would make sportfishing licenses valid for a full year regardless of when the licenses were purchased is taking a longer route through the state Legislature after being designated as a two-year bill.

While the bill passed the Assembly, Wood pulled the bill while it was in the state Senate for some additional work, his office said Monday.

“Because the group put together to address policy and marketing strategies to increase fishing and hunting in California has not completed its work, Assemblyman Wood wanted to make sure his bill reflects that work,” said spokeswoman Cathy Mudge in an email.

The plan is to improve the bill from its current form and incentivize buying fishing and hunting licenses in California. Since 1980, state fishing license sales have plummeted 55% while the state’s population has more than doubled, according to the California Sportfishing League, a group that has been working with Wood on the proposed legislation.

“I don’t know of any other product that is marketed that way,” said Marko Mlikotin, a spokesperson for the league. “... It’s not selling. It’s a very archaic way to market a product. They are selling access to hunting and fishing, but depending on when people buy it, they are not getting full value.”

The goal of the bill is to change that.

“There is broad-based consensus that California’s hunting and fishing licenses are too costly and have lost some appeal to the outdoor sporting community,” said Wood in a prepared statement. “I look forward to working with CDFW and Gov. (Gavin) Newsom’s administration to improve Assembly Bill 1387 in order to accomplish the goals identified in California’s R3 Action Plan and help increase hunting and fishing participation rates.”

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife released its plan to recruit, retain and reactivate — what’s referred to as the R3 plan — in February. A group of stakeholders is looking at ways to implement the findings of the plan and hope to integrate some of those ideas into the legislation. Mlikotin said he expects those to be announced in the fall.

Currently, a sportfishing license for residents 16 years old and older is nearly \$50. The licenses are good through Dec. 31 of the year they are purchased and the cost does not vary depending on whether a purchaser will get 12 months of use or just three months.

The bill, as currently written, would allow for the licenses to be purchased and be effective for 365 days from the date of purchase, but for a price. The bill — after being amended in the Assembly — would require the purchaser to spend 130% of the initial cost to get access to 365 days of use.

Mlikotin said that is analogous to a business increasing the price of a product that isn’t selling well already. Mlikotin added he does not believe that provision will be part of the final version of the bill. Wood’s office was a little less certain but said it is under consideration.

“We think it may change because the working group may have another recommendation to consider,” Mudge said.

The bill is also geared toward helping boost revenue for the CDFW by allowing anglers to opt into renewals.

It also could include the creation of an app that could be used to display an angler’s license. Mlikotin said similar apps are available in other states and offer a variety of benefits.

“You can see when fish are stocked,” he said. “You can look up fishing regulations. You could look for campgrounds. It’s extremely popular and a popular tourism tool as well.”

He added California needs to join other states in moving forward.

“California is jumping on the bandwagon,” he said. “It’s long overdue. At the end of the day, not only will Wood’s legislation increase hunting and fishing rates, but conservation and wildlife programs that are funded by license sales.”

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[https://www.times-standard.com/2019/07/22/capitol-tracker-365-day-fishing-license-bill-to-be-addressed-again-next-session/?fbclid=IwAR2Sgo-pOhbcIyg-k4-QGKGFsFrhfO7\\_ptIJEL0a0nnqeFcsruWrNHqOK04](https://www.times-standard.com/2019/07/22/capitol-tracker-365-day-fishing-license-bill-to-be-addressed-again-next-session/?fbclid=IwAR2Sgo-pOhbcIyg-k4-QGKGFsFrhfO7_ptIJEL0a0nnqeFcsruWrNHqOK04)