



## State Assembly Committee Kills 12-Month Fishing License Bill

Sportfishing bills that aimed to make fishing more affordable and accessible are dead in 2017

September 5, 2017 (Sacramento, CA): On Friday, September 1st, two bills that aimed to address California's significant decline in fishing participation rates and license sales, were killed by the State Assembly Appropriations Committee, chaired by Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher (D) of San Diego.

[Senate Bill 187 \(Berryhill\)](#), sponsored by the California Sportfishing League, was supported by nearly every statewide organization representing business, labor, travel, hospitality, local government and outdoor recreation. The bill had no recorded opposition. In fact, the bill passed the State Senate unanimously before suffering defeat in Assembly Member Gonzalez Fletcher's committee, without a vote. Legislative rules grant the committee chair discretion to determine which bills are held by the Committee.

"California anglers and communities dependent on recreational fishing for tourism and jobs should be profoundly disappointed that a bill that enjoyed overwhelming support was killed in committee. If the bill had been allowed to move to the Assembly Floor, we are certain it would have made it to the Governor's desk," said Marko Mlikotin, executive director of the California Sportfishing League. "Fishing reforms supported by all, and opposed by none are now dead, and so is the hope of reforming a failed fishing license program that is a major contributor to California's declining fishing participation rate."

### Declining Fishing License Sales Are Harming Fishery and Conservation Programs

As a consequence of declining fishing license sales, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (DFW) [Fish and Game Preservation Fund](#) experienced a \$20 million deficit in 2017, and unless license sales increase, the fund is expected to experience financial problems for years to come. Declining revenue has also impacted the quantity and quality of fish stocking. From 2012-16, the number of fish stocked by DFW has declined 39% and the number of pounds has decreased 50%. ([Click Here for Stocking Data](#))

"The state's fishery program is bleeding millions of dollars a year due to declining fishing license sales," said Mlikotin. "This is not going to change until California's failing fishing license system is reformed."

SB 187 aimed to increase fishing participation rates, license sales and state revenue by making annual fishing license sales valid for a full 12-months from the date of purchase. Today, California has an antiquated licensing system whereby annual fishing licenses expire on December 31st of every year, regardless of when it was purchased.

On Friday, Senate Bill 234 (Berryhill) that aimed to curtail illegal local fishing ordinances, such as pier fishing bans, was also killed in Assembly Member Gonzalez Fletcher's committee. In recent years, local government has been limiting access to fishing and imposing fishing restrictions, a power limited to the California Fish and Game Commission.

Reform is still within reach. Assembly Member Gallagher's 12-month fishing license bill ([AB 986](#)) will be considered in January of 2018.

### **Declining Fishing Participation Rates and License Sales**

According to a 2015 CSL study, since 1980 annual fishing license sales decreased over 56% in California, while the state's population increased over 60% during the same time period. In addition, California has one of the costliest annual license in Nation, not including permits. And despite having one of the nation's longest coastlines and thousands of rivers and lakes, the U.S. Census reports that only 4.3% of California adults fish, which ranks dead last per capita among all 50 states.

To read the reaction of California anglers, visit [CSL's Facebook page](#).

The [California Sportfishing League \(CSL\)](#) is a nonprofit coalition of fresh and saltwater anglers, and businesses devoted to protecting access to recreational fishing. California's 2,795,253 million anglers generate \$4.6 billion in economic activity annually, supporting local tourism and jobs.

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