

## ***Western Outdoor News***

### **DFG wants to control all private fisheries, and require licenses to fish private lakes and ponds**

BY BILL KARR/WON Staff Writer

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SACRAMENTO—The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has proposed fish stocking regulations that would change the face of fishing— including Koi ponds— and take away even more outdoor opportunities for sportsmen.

As a result of a 2006 lawsuit by environmental groups against the State's public fish hatcheries, the DFG was ordered to complete an environmental impact report on the potential effects of its fish stocking program on protected species. Rather than just focus just on waters they stocked, however, the resultant DFG proposals would impact all private ponds, lakes and private fisheries—almost every place that fresh water fish swim.

The DFG proposal may also require that anyone fishing in private waters stocked with privately stocked fish must also purchase a fishing license, something that has not been required in California for some 30 years. Industry leaders believe this change will attract fewer fishermen to the sport, which ultimately will result in fewer fishing license sales in the future.

A lawsuit filed by California Association for Recreational Fishing (CARF) contends that the department's environmental impact report went beyond the 2006 lawsuit and court ruling by focusing, not only on the state's own public hatcheries, but also on private fish hatcheries, and privately held lakes and ponds, something not requested by the Court or environmental Plaintiffs.

"These regulations will put thousands of California jobs dependent on recreational fishing at serious risk," said Marko Mlikotin of CARF. "During these tough economic times, requiring fishing licenses on privately stocked lakes and increasing the cost of growing and stocking fish is a really bad idea."

The most costly aspect of the new regulations is that every lake operator and even golf courses will be required to periodically hire a biologist to evaluate the environmental impact of stocked fish on native species, whether endangered or not. The costs will depend on the size and location of the water body, and will prove most costly for fish hatcheries.

The cost for Craig Elliott, the owner and operator of Corona Lake in Southern California, could be as high as \$100,000 or more. "These costs will not only put me out of business, but also private fish hatcheries that supply California lakes and ponds," said Elliott. " I just don't know why the State wants to put additional burdens on fish hatcheries that support recreational fishing, and supply our markets and restaurants out of business. When California grown fish are among the healthiest in Nation, these regulations are simply a solution looking for a problem. "

The future of fresh water fishing and stocking will be determined at the December 14-15th hearing of the Fish and Game Commission in San Diego.

"To protect recreational fishing, the fishing community needs to urge Governor Jerry Brown and his Commission to reject these crippling regulations," Mlikotin said. "Too many jobs and a great pastime is at serious risk."

To learn more about the proposed regulations and how to write Fish and Game, go to [www.SaveCalFishing.org](http://www.SaveCalFishing.org).