



SECTIONS

MULTIMEDIA

DEALS



Commission rejects DFG regulation changes for California fish stocking

Story by Ed Zieralski

Originally published December 15, 2011 at 04:23p.m., updated December 17, 2011 at 09:36a.m.

Trout and catfish tanker trucks will keep rolling from private hatcheries to all state waters following Thursday's action – or make that non-action -- by the state Fish and Game Commission.

California's fish stocking program by private hatcheries in state waters will continue under the same permit regulations as the Commission rejected the Department of Fish and Game's proposed rules changes for stocking and growing fish.

The Commissioners instructed the Fish and Game Department to come back to the Commission only if the agency feels it's necessary and to clarify the DFG's legal exposure for not going forward with the DFG's regulations. The DFG's fisheries staff sought to require hatcheries and fisheries to pay for a broad spectrum of biological assessments before stocking or growing fish.

"My direction is rejection, and I'm not directing them (DFG) to come back," said Commissioner Dan Richards of Upland.

Richards said afterward that he expects the proposed regulation changes to come back to the Commission again in some form, but he said the Commission made it clear that it will not make the hatchery and fisheries groups go through the kind of permitting process the DFG sought in this round.

"The statute is the statute, and only the Legislature can change that," Richards said, adding that it's up to the DFG to go to the Legislature to change the statute regarding the permitting process.

The Fish and Game Commission, meeting in San Diego at Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute's Shedd Auditorium, heard presentations from the Department of Fish and Game and from representatives of fishery and private hatchery owners. State Sen. Tom Harman (R-Orange County) started the public comment by urging the Commission to reject the DFG's proposed changes.

Both sides offered vastly different pictures on what it would cost fishery and hatchery owners to do the necessary biological assessments in order to acquire stocking or fish-growing permits.

As expected, Fish and Game showed the cost to be in the hundreds of dollars, while the representatives of the fisheries and hatcheries said the cost will be, on average, around \$133,000.

Dixon Lake in Escondido was one of the four lakes studied for cost by the independent Sapphos Environmental, Inc., and

Dixon came in at \$181,000 for the biological assessment to keep stocking fish. The breakdown was \$25,919 for fish assessment, \$15,490.74 for birds, \$139,677.06 for herpetofauna.

Chris McKinney of the City of Escondido said earlier that the city didn't have the funds to pay for such an assessment and that the cost would have to be passed on to lake users. Some lake operators said they'd have to close their lakes or hatcheries, costing hundreds of jobs.

Doug Elliott, who owns Corona Lake and runs the concession at Santa Ana River Lakes, said in his more than 30 years of stocking fish there hasn't been one report of stocked fish impacting a species in Southern California.

"If these regulations go through, I'll have to let 50 employees go, and I won't be buying \$1 million worth of fish a year from hatcheries, which also will go out of business," Elliott said.

Opponents showed a history of stocking in California that goes back to the initial stocking of bass and catfish in 1874, for a stocking history that goes back nearly 140 years.

Louie Zimm of the San Diego Yacht Club and the San Diego Fly Fishers pointed out that the proposed regulations even call for a stocking permit to plant mosquito fish, which are planted to fight the spread of mosquitoes and the spread of diseases such as West Nile Virus and malaria.

Only one person, Paul Weakland, spoke in favor of the stocking and hatchery regulations and the protection of natural resources.

"It's not nice to fool with Mother Nature," said Weakland, offering his mantra. He often blames the DFG for stocking abalone with withering stress syndrome and thus wiping out abalone in many areas.

Comments ()

[Complete terms »](#)

Be relevant, civil, honest, discreet and responsible.

MORE NEWS



SECTIONS



TRAFFIC



OBITUARIES



CLASSIFIEDS



HOME



[FULL SITE](#)

