

The Sportfishing Stimulus Act of 2015



The Sportfishing Stimulus Act of 2015 (SB 345), authored by Senator Tom Berryhill (R-Twain Harte) and Assembly Member Frank Bigelow (R-O’Neals), and sponsored by the California Sportfishing League (CSL), seeks to reform California’s costly and antiquated fishing license program. The state’s current program has contributed to a decline in the state’s fishing participation rate and threatens recreational fishing’s economic contribution to communities dependent on outdoor tourism for jobs and tax revenue.

High Costs Contributing to Decline in Recreational Fishing

California has experienced an unprecedented decline in recreational fishing despite having one of the country’s longest coastlines, 4,000 lakes/reservoirs, over 20,000 registered ponds, and thousands of miles of streams and rivers.

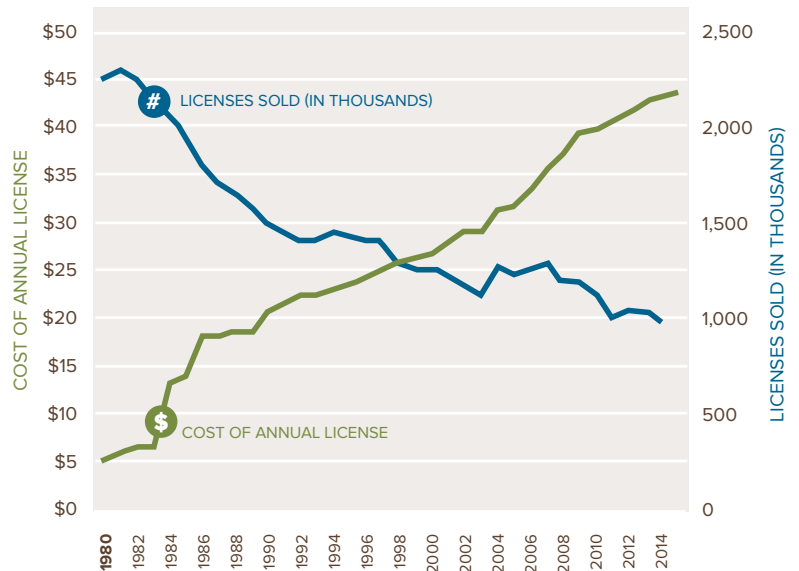
Over the past 35 years, annual fishing license sales have plummeted more than 55%, while the cost of an annual license has increased 840%! Today, California ranks dead last in the nation for sportfishing participation.

If this trend continues, annual fishing license sales could drop below 500,000 by 2027, or another 49% over the next 12 years. Should this occur, between 1980 and 2027, annual license sales will have dropped 78%.

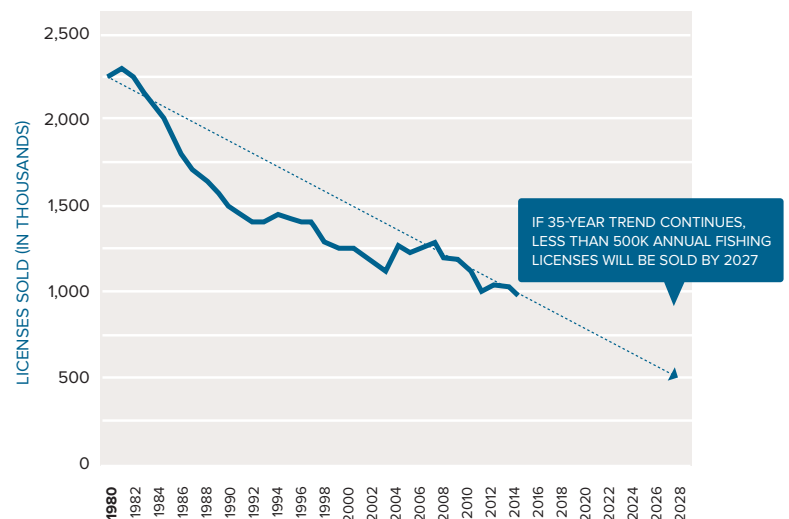
While increasing costs is a major concern, the lack of value offered by the state’s fishing license has proven to be a significant barrier to participation. In fact, a CSL Study found that California’s fishing licenses are among the costliest in the nation. In 1980 an annual fishing license sold for \$5; today that license could cost some anglers over \$120 year with permits. In addition, the state’s fishing licenses are only valid for the calendar year, expiring December 31 of each year regardless of when purchased.

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COST OF ANNUAL FISHING LICENSES AND LICENSES SOLD 1980-2014



ANNUAL FISHING LICENSES SOLD



Consequences of the Decline

Recreational fishing has a significant impact on the state's economy and tax base, contributing over \$4.9 billion to the state's \$95 billion tourism industry. As the state's sportfishing participation rate continues to plummet, so will its economic contribution to communities dependent on recreational fishing for outdoor tourism, jobs and tax revenue.

Furthermore, licensing programs fund critical conservation, fish stocking and wildlife programs. As participation continues to decline, there will be a point when there are not enough anglers to finance these programs.

Solution: The Sportfishing Stimulus Act of 2015

Senate Bill 345, introduced by State Senator Tom Berryhill, aims to first stabilize and then increase fishing participation rates by reforming California's costly and antiquated fishing license program.

- **Establishes a license that is valid for a full 12 months:** Cost and value are among the greatest barriers to participation, as licenses that can expire just months after being purchased provide little value to anglers, especially at a base price of \$47.01, or more than \$120 with permits. The current system is truly an antiquated system that motorists would never tolerate if the Department of Motor Vehicles applied the same system to car registration fees.
- **Establishes a junior fishing license with a base price of \$8.25:** Since 71% of the country's anglers started fishing when they were under 18, increasing youth participation is critical to growing participation rates. Recognizing that cost is a barrier for young hunters, the California State Legislature adopted a junior hunting license in 2014. The same consideration now should be given to young anglers.
- **Exempts bona fide charitable organizations from possession or out-of-season limits:** Angler clubs support various charitable causes that include, but are not limited to, environmental and habitat restoration, youth, veterans, education and those with disabilities. This bill would allow bona fide charitable organizations to use fish donated by recreational anglers at their functions without fear of being above possession or out-of-season limits.

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Conclusion

The Sportfishing Stimulus Act of 2015 will help reverse the unprecedented decline in fishing participation and license sales in California.

To support SB 345 or acquire a copy of the legislation, please contact the California Sportfishing League at info@sportfishingconservation.org or contact Senator Berryhill's Capitol Office at (916) 651-4008 or www.senate.ca.gov/berryhill.



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