

Dear Commissioners and Mr. Bloom:

Please consider my comments with regard to the proposed new fishing regulations, particularly as they apply to the Eastern High Sierras and Inyo and Mono Counties.

While I am sure that a lot of well-intended thought and effort went into the proposals, I know without question that they would be devastating for our local economies and to fish and fisherman.

OPENING DAY PROPOSED CHANGE:

Perhaps the worst proposal for our economy is the idea of changing opening day to anything other than the 4th Saturday in April.

I suspect that weekend has been a family and friendship annual event for 4 or 5 generations of regular visitors to our area. Literally thousands of visitor's time all or part of their vacations for that fourth weekend in April. Our motels, restaurants, gas stations, tackle shops, resort operators, guides and a host of other businesses and all their workers rely on this tradition to continue. Some businesses will go out of business if you take away a full month of their season.

Fish-mas, as we call it, is a, if not the, main event of our local economies. Changing it to the end of May would conflict with our other greatest visitor draw event, Mule days on the Memorial weekend and probably result in thousands staying away from both events rather than suffer through the crowds of people with often dissimilar interests competing for too few motels, restaurants, campsites, boat rentals and other businesses.

YEAR AROUND FISHING PROPOSAL:

Year-round fishing would also have huge adverse consequences in at least two different ways.

First, you already are severely hurting our economies by stocking too few fish. We are a tourist economy and fishing is the main tourism draw.

We need at least two or three times the number of fish stocked that we have been getting the last few years. Spread thinner over a full year, the fishing would be even worse than it has become in recent years and fewer and fewer people would choose to visit and vacation here. To preserve the local economies and draw visitors and even many local fishermen, more fish stocking is already necessary. Are you planning to at least double it for the extended season? It needs to be more than doubled even for the present season.

Second, the manpower to enforce regulations, free vehicles from snow and mud and save people who fall through the ice just does not exist. You can be absolutely guaranteed that allowing fishing during the closed season will result and people falling through the ice and drowning and freezing to death. At least now, when the majority or all of the ice fishing is compacted into the opening week of fishing, there is safety in numbers. Further, there is generally good fishing when no one has been allowed fish in the last half year and it would be poor if others had the advantage of fishing all year round. Who will clean up after the year-round fishermen when the concessionaires are closed for months at a time? Year-round fishing in the high country will result in death, litter and contamination and poorer fishing and probably reduced license sales which I suspect are already going down because of reduced stocking and poor fishing.

SIMPLIFICATION:

The whole concept of simplification is both unnecessary and undesirable.

One size does not fit all (nor do six).

Obviously, the greatest simplifications would be: 1. To close all fishing all year by all methods, or 2. Open it all year by all methods without limits. Neither those draconian alternatives nor the six proposed are going to work well in many, many places.

Different waters need different approaches. You need to close streams during the spawning seasons in those streams that support spawning fish. Over fished lakes and rivers need to be periodically closed for the fish populations to recover. Lakes that are frozen six months a year should be closed to fishing except when access is safe and sufficient manpower is present for safety and sanitation.

What is needed is not less regulations or more simplifications. It is far more stocking and lower license fees and year-round licenses from the date of issue. and regulations geared to each water.

We all have smart cell phones, laptops and tablets that can give us regulations instantly for any area. Combine the regulations with GPS technology and no one will have an excuse for not knowing the rules and each water can be governed in the best way for the fish and people who enjoy trying to catch them, which is, or should be, our goal.

WHAT IS NEEDED:

What is needed is not less regulations or more simplifications. It is far more stocking and lower license fees and year-round licenses from the date of issue. and regulations geared to each water with modern methods of communication which are readily available.

PROVE THEM WRONG:

Along with a large crowd in a packed pavilion, I attended the public comment meeting on March 20, 2019, in Bishop, California. It was my impression that the vast majority there were against the proposed regulation changes. Certainly, every business owner was against them.

However, the worst part of the gathering was the feeling that most people thought the whole session was a mock hearing and that the Department of Fish and Wildlife had already decided what it would do before any of the hearings. Your Department has done a tremendous amount of good in the past. This rampant distrust of your Department was really very sad to see.

Please prove the skeptics in fair government wrong and take into serious consideration the comments of those who attended the meeting or took the time to comment.

Thank you for your consideration.