

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1393 (McGuire) – As Amended July 6, 2026

Policy Committee: Water, Parks and Wildlife

Vote: 11 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill makes changes to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) steelhead report and restoration card (steelhead report card) program and to the management of the Dungeness crab fishery.

More specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Increases the base fee for the steelhead report card from \$5 to \$15.
- 2) Establishes a late or nonreturn fee to be assessed on individuals who do not return their steelhead report card and prohibits CDFW from selling a steelhead report card to a person who has not returned their steelhead report card until the late or nonreturn fee is paid; establishes a \$20 base late or nonreturn fee for the 2027 license year and allows CDFW to adjust the fee annually, as specified; requires that funds received by CDFW from the late or nonreturn fee be used in the same manner as the revenues from steelhead report card sales; and prohibits CDFW or the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) from waiving the late or nonreturn fee.
- 3) Requires CDFW to submit the next steelhead report card program report to the Legislature by July 1, 2030, and requires CDFW to additionally report "collected fishing effort data with error bars."
- 4) Extends the sunset of the steelhead report card program to January 1, 2032, and extends the sunset dates of various provisions related to the management of the Dungeness crab fishery to January 1, 2037.
- 5) Requires, beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2027, and every two FYs thereafter through FY 2037, the amount remaining in the Dungeness Crab Account, not to exceed the remaining balance in the account after specified allocations are made, and, if the account has a prudent reserve, to be available for appropriation by the Legislature to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC), pursuant to item 6, below.
- 6) Requires CDFW, upon appropriation, to provide the PSMFC with funding from the Dungeness Crab Account, consistent with the California Dungeness Crab Task Force (Task Force) spending plan; requires the Task Force, by December 31, 2027, and annually thereafter, to develop and submit to the Legislature this spending plan; and sunsets this provision on January 1, 2037.

- 7) Allows, unless otherwise prohibited in regulation or by a CDFW director's action, until January 1, 2037, a vessel to transit waters closed to Dungeness crab fishing with Dungeness crab traps on board if numerous specified conditions are met and requires CDFW to provide a notification procedure for a vessel experiencing mechanical issues during transit.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Ongoing costs and revenue impacts (General Fund, Fish and Game Preservation Fund (FGPF)) of an unknown amount for CDFW to continue administering the steelhead report card program, increase the steelhead report card base fee, implement and administer a late or nonreturn fee, update required legislative reporting, grant surplus funds from the Dungeness Crab Account to the PSMFC, process vessel transit notices, and continue Dungeness crab fishery management activities, as described below.

Steelhead Report Card. In 2022 and 2023, CDFW sold a total of 92,767 report cards to 66,359 individual anglers, generating \$794,365 in revenue. The program had an operating budget of about \$1.2 million for the 2022 and 2023 FYs combined, of which \$200,000 was dedicated to CDFW's administrative costs for the program and \$1 million was dedicated to funding ongoing projects that benefited steelhead populations. All unspent funds were transferred to the Steelhead Trout Account within the FGPF. The effect of increasing the base fee from \$10.29 (fee amount in 2026 adjusted for inflation) to \$15 (\$16.25 with taxes), as this bill proposes, is unknown, as future sales, base fee inflation, and spending authority change by year. A higher fee may increase revenue or price out a portion of the angling community. In addition, a \$20 late or nonreturn fee may increase revenue if anglers choose to pay the fee; however, if anglers opt out of paying the fee, revenue may not increase and may impact overall report card sales for the following season due to reduced sales from those opting out of the program.

Dungeness Crab Fishery. CDFW's annual cost of administering the Dungeness crab fishery is about \$1.1 million. Extending various sunsets dates related to this program means these costs will continue through 2037.

The provision in the bill allowing a vessel to transit waters closed to Dungeness crab fishing would result in additional workload for CDFW's law enforcement division, as the department would need to monitor notices of intent as vessels transit through closed areas and develop a notification procedure for a vessel experiencing mechanical issues during transit. However, CDFW anticipates these costs to be absorbable within existing resources.

The bill will also result in the transfer of an unknown amount, potentially in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, of surplus funds in the Dungeness Crab Account to the PSMFC every two years. The Fish and Game Code establishes the Dungeness Crab Trap Limit Program (DCTLTP). Revenues collected through the DCTLTP are deposited in the Dungeness Crab Account, and the use of these funds is restricted to administration and enforcement of the DCTLTP and supporting the administration and facilitation of the Task Force. As of FY 2023–24, the Dungeness Crab Account had an end-of-year balance of approximately \$3 million. DOF requires the account to maintain a reserve sufficient to cover CDFW's two-year spending authority of \$1.1 million. The surplus in the account was approximately \$300,000, \$1.3 million, and \$800,000 at the end of FY 2021–22, FY 2022–23, and FY 2023–24, respectively. The Task Force, in its 2025 annual report, recommends surplus funds in the Dungeness Crab Account in excess of CDFW and the Task Force's expenditures be provided to the PSMFC biannually for, among other things, gear

retrieval programs, vessel surveys, applied research, and the testing or adoption of new technologies that enhance fishery operations and sustainability.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

California's steelhead trout and Dungeness crab fisheries are cornerstones of California's natural heritage and economic lifelines for communities throughout the state. [This bill] preserves the state management frameworks that have been essential to sustainably overseeing these fisheries and protecting marine ecosystems from entanglement risk. The bill also ensures that reliable data – not guesswork – drives decision-making and determines how we allocate access and enforce laws. Fishermen, processors, and resource managers need clear and predictable rules around which they build their lives and livelihoods.

2) **Background. *Steelhead Report Card.*** Current law requires anglers fishing for steelhead in anadromous waters to purchase a steelhead report card, record their fishing information, and return their catch information to CDFW. The purpose of the report card is to gather angler data to support the department's responsibility to manage steelhead populations and fisheries. Revenue generated from steelhead report card sales is used to administer the steelhead trout report and restoration card program and fund projects that contribute to the conservation, monitoring, or recovery of steelhead populations.

According to a 2025 CDFW report to the Legislature, only a small percentage (32.2%) of cards were returned during 2022 and 2023. CDFW has not implemented penalties for steelhead report card non-response, although the department has the authority to do so. At its June meeting, the Commission considered multiple changes to the steelhead report card to increase the report card return rate, including charging a nonreturn fee to an angler who does not return the steelhead report card and not issuing a new steelhead report card until the nonreturn fee is paid.

Dungeness Crab Fishery. Despite a slow and steady decline in fishery participation since the 1980s, the commercial Dungeness crab fishery is consistently one of the most valuable fisheries in the state. In 2025 alone, the value of the 8.6 million pounds of landed Dungeness crab was \$56.4 million. The commercial Dungeness crab fishery is a limited entry fishery, and fishers are authorized to purchase tags for only a certain number of traps biannually. The primary management authority for the Dungeness crab fishery rests with the California Legislature, although recent legislation delegated some authority to CDFW, improving the department's ability to be responsive to emerging management concerns, such as increased marine life entanglement risk.

The Task Force, established in statute in 2008, is a forum for commercial fishers to provide input on the management of the fishery as well as to provide recommendations to the Legislature regarding proposed statutory changes to the fishery. The provisions of this bill related to the fishery reflect recent recommendations from the Task Force's 2025 annual report.

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