

EASTERN SIERRA FOCUS

By CJ Webb 1.22.10 (vlr@qnet.com)

News – Changes – Editorial Opinion

Several changes have occurred over the past couple months. One that will affect License Agents throughout California is the Automated License Data System (ALDS) which will replace the current paper licensing system starting August 2010. The Associate Governmental Program Analyst for the Department says there are a couple other options available, but not for us due to our location. Virginia Lakes will no longer be an Agent for the Department of Fish and Game due to the requirements of a separate phone line and high-speed internet. All I can visualize are problems in compliance for those not willing to drive the 36 mile round-trip to Bridgeport or Lee Vining to purchase a license when anglers are accustomed to purchasing their licenses from us.

The California Fish and Game Commission met on December 9th in LA to discuss several pressing issues for anglers unveiling the “Warden’s Stamp” and the “No-Wear Fishing Initiative,” removing the requirement that mandated California recreational anglers “display” their license when fishing. The Warden’s Stamp is a voluntary \$5 stamp that will be sold alongside hunting and fishing licenses in order to help fund special equipment for wardens, help in their advanced training and provide some family benefits that the state no longer can afford.

The Trout stocking lawsuit in California was found to have some unintended consequences threatening the entire aquaculture industry (including private growers of trout, catfish and other fishes throughout the state). DFG’s preferred alternative in the environmental document would require a new set of regulations, permits and testing that will affect their businesses. Reports state that trout and catfish growers have been disappearing from California due to increasing costs and regulations for the past several years.

Anglers across the state should have concerns as private hatcheries have picked up the slack due to DFG budget constraints. It is believed that the environmental damage caused by the DFG’s hatchery program including the private growers is almost negligible. DFG should have written a categorical exemption for the hatchery program decades ago and there would not have been a lawsuit filed except for site-specific suits that would address the few serious problems. Without stocking there will be other impacts on roadside waters as front-country anglers will hike into the backcountry for wild trout, and it’s not brain surgery where this will go.

DFG Lawsuit status – The joint EIR/EIS was finalized on January 11, 2009. For more information go to: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/news/pubnotice/hatchery/>.

This year will see a lot more environmental groups attempting to take away our natural resources, access public lands and even fishing. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is moving 40 of its main

office staff (25%) to the Los Angeles area in an attempt to access the easy-to-influence celebrities in order to fill their declining coffers.

The other problem is the Humane Society of the US (HSUS); they want the no-use of public lands or waters, no use of our natural resources to keep people off public lands by using the words “protect” and “preserve” as their trigger words. They are currently urging the President to appoint an Animal Protection Liaison in the White House. Cass Sunstein is already the Regulatory Czar and if they get their way, it is quite possible that the United States, as we know it, may become unrecognizable. Be vigilant and watch for anything that can impact the use of public lands and resources, and the rights of Americans under “The Constitution”.

DFG Reform - It seems there is a move to reform the DFG as stated by Jared Huffman, a long time angler and champion of fishery issues who will make this is priority in 2010. This was a very lengthy article by Tom Martens in the last issue of California Fly Fisher Nov/Dec 2009.

Mr. Martens discusses the political influences, budget and funding, preservation fund, staff furloughs, frozen funds, fish-planting priorities, warden force, the Delta, water, and Bills relating to fish and game. If you don’t have a copy, drop me an email and I’ll send you an electronic copy.

DFG Director confirmed according to Western Outdoor News January 15. John McCamman was officially named Director of the Department of Fish and Game a daunting position for him to say the least.

BAD NEWS is that the Governor has proposed a \$5 million cut to hunting, fishing programs and this proposal must go to the State Legislature for consideration, with the intention being for the Gov. and the Legislature to reach agreement on the final budget by the beginning of the new state fiscal year on 7.1.10.

Tim Alpers with Inland Aquaculture Group (IAG) based on Conway Ranch (Mono County) has acquired 80,000 fertilized brown trout “eyed” eggs from DFG’s Mt. Shasta hatchery. The Bridgeport Fishing Enhancement Foundation (BFEF) will incubate them and split 50-50 with IAG and end product is destined for Mono County waters. They are currently about 1 ¼ inch in size and a 25% loss has occurred, which was less than expected, but 60,000 browns will be a great infusion for the county.

See you on the water.....cj