



CALIFORNIA STATE AUDITOR

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FACT SHEET

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Report: 2008-115

The California State Auditor released the following report today:

Department of Fish and Game

Its Limited Success in Identifying Viable Projects and Its Weak Controls Reduce the Benefit of Revenues From Sales of the Bay-Delta Sport Fishing Enhancement Stamp

BACKGROUND

Since January 2004, a person must first purchase a fish stamp—the Bay-Delta Sport Fishing Enhancement Stamp (fish stamp)—to sportfish in the San Francisco Bay and Delta. Fees collected from fish stamp sales are deposited in a restricted account within the preservation fund, which is administered by the Department of Fish and Game (Fish and Game), and can only be used for activities that promote sportfishing opportunities or that provide long-term, sustainable benefits either to the primary sportfishing population or to anglers in the areas defined as bay-delta regulated waters. A fish stamp advisory committee (committee) identifies and recommends projects, while Fish and Game administers all the fees, recommends and approves projects for funding, and funds and monitors the projects.

KEY FINDINGS

In our review of Fish and Game's administration of the fish stamp program, we reported the following:

- Fish and Game has been slow in using the fees collected from fish stamp sales.
 - ✓ During the first two years of the program, fish stamp sales generated \$2.9 million, yet Fish and Game did not seek authority to use the funds in those two years.
 - ✓ Fish and Game was slow in identifying and approving projects—by the end of the third year of the program, it had approved only three projects and spent just \$160,000 of the \$4.3 million in total fish stamp fees collected at that time.
 - ✓ As of June 2008, Fish and Game has generated \$8.6 million in revenue and interest since the inception of the program, yet it has only approved 17 projects and has only spent \$1.6 million—leaving a surplus of \$7 million.
- Fish and Game does not adequately monitor fish stamp project activity. Project expenditures are difficult to reconcile and have been incorrectly charged to other funding sources. Further, periodic reports that Fish and Game provides to the committee do not include project expenditures or detailed information on project status.
- During fiscal years 2005–06 through 2007–08, Fish and Game inappropriately charged an estimated \$201,000 in costs to the fish stamp account for activities unrelated to the fish stamp program.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We made several recommendations to Fish and Game including that it work with the committee in developing a spending plan to identify, approve, and fund viable projects. We also recommended that Fish and Game adequately track and report project costs within its accounting system and ensure that its project managers reconcile their files to the accounting records. Moreover, Fish and Game should provide the committee with accurate financial and project information, such as actual project costs, detailed information on project status, and administrative expenditures. Finally, Fish and Game should ensure only appropriate activities are paid with fish stamp revenue and it should correct inappropriate charges it previously made.

