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## **Anti-Poaching Bill Becomes Law**

**Sacramento, California** – On October 11th, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Assembly Bill 708 (Huffman), a measure that seeks to combat illegal commercialization and egregious poaching of California’s fish and game resources by establishing mandatory minimum fines and jail time for those that violate the law.

Specifically, AB 708 would establish a fine of \$5000 - \$40,000 and/or impose a penalty of up to one year in county jail for violators who are convicted of illegally selling, purchasing, or trading any amphibian, bird, fish, mammal, or reptile for profit or personal gain. AB 708 also increases the fine and jail time for those who egregiously violate the daily bag limit or possession limit of fish, reptiles, birds, amphibians or mammals. Additionally, an individual convicted of violating any provision of AB 708 would be subject to possible permanent hunting or fishing license revocation.

“Poaching has, and continues to be a problem for certain species – most notably, big game. Several recent high profile poaching cases involving deer and antelope have further demonstrated the need for tougher criminal penalties for those who have no respect for the law,” stated Miles Moretti, President/ CEO of the Mule Deer Foundation and Board Member of the California Outdoor Heritage Alliance (COHA).

When AB 708 was first introduced it arguably cast far too wide a net and could have criminalized otherwise law abiding hunters and anglers. After working closely with Assembly Member Huffman, his staff, the Department of Fish and Game, and other conservation partners, COHA was able to help amend AB 708 to more narrowly target illegal commercialization and flagrant poaching of California’s fish and game resources.

As signed by the Governor, AB 708 would only apply to those that illegally sell, purchase, or trade fish and game or to individuals that illegally possess more than three times the daily bag or possession limit. AB 708 also clarifies that an individual may possess unlabeled migratory birds, such as waterfowl, dove and band-tailed pigeons, as authorized by federal waterfowl regulations. Additionally, AB 708 does not impact a person’s ability to gift a possession limit of fish or game to another person, regardless of whether or not both parties reside in the same dwelling.

“Hunters pride themselves on protecting wildlife and thus have no respect for poachers. AB 708 strikes a better balance between cracking down on illicit poaching and commercialization of game species, while not inadvertently criminalizing law abiding sportsmen and women,” declared Jason Rhine, Director of Advocacy for the California Outdoor Heritage Alliance.

*The California Outdoor Heritage Alliance is a 501(c) 4 non-profit political advocacy organization dedicated solely to the promotion of wildlife and the protection of our hunting heritage. COHA professional staff is active at the California State Legislature, Congress, State Fish and Game Commission, State and Federal resource agencies and all other political arenas where decisions are made which may impact wildlife management, habitat conservation, wildlife program funding, hunting access and opportunity, and your ability to purchase and possess sporting arms and munitions. COHA was created in early 2006 by the California Waterfowl Association. For more information on COHA and its efforts, visit their website at [www.outdoorheritage.org](http://www.outdoorheritage.org)*

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