

COME TO COALINGA

“How to Bring a 50BMG into CA for a Match and Not go to Jail”

By Bob Pohl

The stark beauty of the Coalinga, California rifle range, which (after a lengthy hiatus) is soon to be the site of .50 caliber competitions once again. New benches (foreground) recently emplaced on the 1000 yard line by volunteer members of the FCSA. Photo © 2009 by Greg Sonnenburg

On June 5-7, 2009, we are having a sanctioned match at Coalinga, California. As many know, California has a 50BMG rifle ban. So the question is how does someone that doesn't live in California legally attend a match here? Luckily for us, there is a way.

The California Department of Justice (CADOJ) has on their website <http://ag.ca.gov/firearms/> a listing of California's gun laws under the label “Dangerous Weapons Control Laws.” Unless you are a lawyer, it makes for dry reading but I will try to walk you thru it. I should also say that I am not a lawyer. I will recite the laws as found on their website, so you can review them for yourself.

The section that covers this is 12280 (m), which reads:

“(m) Subdivisions (a), and (b), and (c) shall not apply to the possession and importation of an assault weapon or a .50 BMG rifle into this state by a nonresident if all of the following conditions are met:

(1) The person is attending or going directly to or coming directly from an organized competitive match or league competition that involves the use of an assault weapon or a .50 BMG rifle.

(2) The competition or match is conducted on the premises of one of the following:

(A) A target range that holds a regulatory or business license for the purpose of practicing shooting at that target range.

(B) A target range of a public or private club or organization that is organized for the

purpose of practicing shooting at targets.

(3) The match or competition is sponsored by, conducted under the auspices of, or approved by, a law enforcement agency or a nationally or state recognized entity that fosters proficiency in, or promotes education about, firearms.

(4) The assault weapon or .50 BMG rifle is transported in accordance with Section 12026.1 or 12026.2.

(5) The person is 18 years of age or over and is not in a class of persons prohibited from possessing firearms by virtue of Section 12021 or 12021.1 of this code or Section 8100 or 8103 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.”

So it is legal as long as these 5 points are met. Let's cover them one at a time.

Point (1): California doesn't let you come and go sight-seeing while you have your 50BMG here. No side trips to Disneyland, the beach, San Francisco, or any of the many other tourist spots here in CA. Come into Coalinga, enjoy the match, and then go home.

All shooters from out-of-state will need to register in advance for the match. That way, you can carry the match registration with you to prove that you are heading to and from a match, should there be a question. Shooters from inside CA should also pre-register and they should carry their 50BMG rifle registration with them.

Point (2): The range is run by the

Coalinga Rifle Club. They are open 7 days a week for members and host many shooting matches a year. It is easy to see that this point is met.

Point (3): It is sanctioned by the FCSA and hosted at the Coalinga Rifle Club. Both organizations meet this point.

Point (4): 50BMG rifles must be unloaded and in a locked container when transported.

The term “locked container,” means a secure container that is fully enclosed and locked by a padlock, key lock, combination lock, or similar locking device. This includes the trunk of a motor vehicle, but does not include the utility or glove compartment. For more information, refer to California Penal Code Section 12026.1.

This could also be a soft case, as long as it is lockable.

You cannot ship a 50BMG rifle in or out of CA, unless you go thru a CA licensed assault weapons dealer, so no UPS or FedEx to get your rifle here.

Point (5): Unfortunately, no one under 18 is allowed to fire a 50BMG rifle in CA. While I don't like this, it is the law. So any youth competitors would have to be shooting a 510DTC or something like that. Of course, you should be legally allowed to own guns. If you aren't, well that pretty much speaks for itself.

I hope that this answers any questions you may have. You can always contact the CADOJ directly. I hope to see you all at a match here soon.