

RANGE OF MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR CALIFORNIA'S 2017-2018 COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL GROUND FISH FISHERIES

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) notes that over the past two specification cycles, agencies and advisory bodies were asked to minimize the scope of requests for changes to management measures in order to facilitate completion of NEPA documents in time to meet implementation deadlines. Consequently, CDFW views the 2017-2018 cycle as a long-awaited opportunity to consider significant changes and/or different management approaches, with the intent of maximizing opportunities within harvest limits. The range of potential changes described in this report should be considered preliminary and may be refined, amended, or augmented during the scoping process based on additional discussions with our constituents.

CHANGES TO CLOSED AREAS

Changes to Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs)

Proposals to explore all-depth fishing opportunities (i.e., no RCA lines) in designated months and areas will be examined. Proposals to explore inseason triggers that would automatically close fishing activities regionally in either deep or shallow areas (or both) upon attainment of specified limits will also be examined.

Changes to Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Areas (YRCA)

CDFW will examine current YRCAs and evaluate whether changes are necessary or additional YRCAs need to be added

Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA)

CDFW may examine the prospect of implementing hotspot closures for cowcod in southern California as an alternative to the CCA.

Changes to RCA Lines

Proposals to correct omissions and/or modify RCA lines to more closely approximate depth contours will be explored. A possible error has been identified in southern California near Hueneme Canyon and staff will work with Enforcement officers to provide the necessary corrections.

INSEASON MANAGEMENT ACTIONS ALLOWING NMFS TO AUTOMATICALLY CLOSE FISHERIES ON PROJECTED ATTAINMENT OF ESTABLISHED LIMITS

CDFW would like to explore the possibility of using an inseason management process for groundfish, similar to processes used for salmon and halibut, allowing for inseason actions to be taken automatically based on agency and advisory recommendations in coordination with NMFS and other management entities. Existing inseason processes have worked exceptionally well to both maximize allowable harvests and effectively avoid overages in salmon and halibut quota fisheries.

COMMERCIAL

Trip Limits

CDFW will be evaluating various commercial trip limits 2017-2018 management cycle and may propose modifications as appropriate. Those trip limits may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- California scorpionfish
- Open Access shelf rockfish between 40°10' N lat. and 34°27' N lat.
- Canary rockfish

RECREATIONAL

CDFW will be evaluating various changes to the recreational groundfish fishery for the 2017-2018 management cycle. Those changes include, but are not limited to the following:

Changes in Season Lengths and Depth Restrictions in Groundfish Management Areas

Season lengths and depth restrictions may be changed within each Management Area as needed to remain within the harvest limits, while providing as much fishing opportunity as possible. Exemptions from seasons and depths restrictions may also be explored for petrale sole and starry flounder to allow year round retention (i.e., similar to Pacific sanddab).

Changes to Bag Limits

Changes to bag limits for various species (e.g., black rockfish, canary rockfish, and China rockfish) may be proposed to keep catches within allowable limits or to provide additional opportunities as appropriate.