

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON 2015-2016
 BIENNIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) hosted a teleconference in early June to discuss potential groundfish regulation changes for 2015 and 2016 and to solicit input from the public to help develop the State’s recommendation to the Council. Participants on the call represented all fishing sectors throughout the state. While there were differing opinions expressed on preferred management measures, most on the call expressed a desire to extend the seasons in the recreational fishery wherever possible and to provide for increased lingcod opportunities in the commercial fishery and allow some incidental-level catch in months that are presently closed. Maintaining a precautionary approach and preventing early closure of fisheries was important to all participants.

Based in part on public input received during the teleconference, CDFW offers the following recommendations for Council consideration in deciding final preferred season structures and management measures for 2015-16.

California Commercial Fisheries

Season Structures

CDFW supports maintaining the status quo RCA boundaries for the commercial nearshore fishery (20 fm¹ between 42° N and 40° 10' N latitude; 30 fm between 40° 10' N latitude and 34° 27' N. latitude; 60 fm south 34° 27' N. latitude) as the Final Preferred Alternative. In the event that more yelloweye are made available to the nearshore fishery, deeper depth restrictions north of 40° 10' N latitude may be explored.

Management Measures

Lingcod Trip Limits

CDFW supports option 2a for increasing the lingcod trip limit for the limited entry and open access sectors north of 40° 10' N latitude (Table 1). In addition, CDFW supports providing access to lingcod during periods 1, 2, and 6 for north of 40° 10' N latitude and for periods 1 and 6 south of 40° 10' N latitude (Table 2).

Table 1. Preferred trip limits for limited entry and open access lingcod north of 40° 10' N latitude.

	Jan/Feb	Mar/Apr	May/June	Jul/Aug	Sept/Oct	Nov/Dec
Limited Entry	200	200	1,200	1,200	1,200	600/200
Open Access	100	100	600	600	600	600/100

Table 2. Preferred trip limits for limited entry and open access lingcod south of 40° 10' N latitude.

	Jan/Feb	Mar/Apr	May/June	Jul/Aug	Sept/Oct	Nov/Dec
Limited Entry	200	CLOSED	800	800	800	400/200
Open Access	100	CLOSED	400	400	400	400/100

¹ The 20 fm RCA is defined by depth, not waypoints.

California Recreational Fishery

Season Structure

In accordance with CDFW’s policy to provide a stable fishery and minimize inseason disruptions, seasons are designed to maximize fishing opportunity while keeping harvest within specified harvest guidelines. This includes multi-month closures early in the year as part of the overall design to ensure that limits are not exceeded. Although allowable levels of cowcod and yelloweye rockfish increased slightly compared to prior years, canary rockfish and minor nearshore rockfish north of 40° 10' N latitude constrain the recreational fishery and are one of the main factors affecting season lengths.

CDFW supports the following recreational RCA configuration and season structures (Fig 1). The season structure prioritizes increasing season lengths when possible, maintaining a precautionary approach, and recognizing the constraints imposed from canary and minor nearshore rockfish. Compared to the 2014 season structure, the proposal for 2015-16 would provide a modest increase in season length in the Mendocino management area (2 months), the San Francisco management area (6 weeks) and the Central management area (one month), while the Southern management area would maintain its season length but allow for an increase in allowable fishing depth to 60 fathoms. The Northern area would remain at status-quo seasons and depths.

Management Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Northern	Closed					May 15 – Oct 31 <20fm					Closed	
Mendocino	Closed					May 15 – Oct 31 <20fm					Closed	
San Francisco	Closed				April 15 – Dec 31 <30fm							
Central	Closed			April 1 – Dec 31 <40fm								
Southern	Closed		Mar 1 – Dec 31 <60 fm									

Figure 1. California recreational groundfish season structure for 2015-2016.

Management Measures

CDFW supports the No Action alternative for groundfish bag limits and size limits with one exception - lingcod bag limit. Increasing the lingcod bag limit from two fish to three fish is intended to provide more opportunity for anglers to achieve their allocation of lingcod. Mortality of lingcod in recent years has been far less than the non-trawl allocation; therefore increasing the bag limit to three fish is not expected to exceed the non-trawl allocation, let alone the entire ACL.

Lingcod was last assessed in 2009 and at that time the stock was healthy, with a depletion level of 74%. Ten year catch projections in the assessment indicate that the depletion level at the start of 2015 would be 68.4%. Given that mortality has been far below the ACL in each of the years since the assessment was conducted, it is likely that depletion is actually much higher (i.e. more optimistic). Although the stock assessment did have considerable uncertainty, it is clear that the stock is healthy with a depletion level well above 40%, and a small increase in projected catches by both the commercial and recreational sectors is not expected to pose undue risk to this stock or affect stock status.