From: Louie Zimm, Southern California Charter Representative on the 
Groundfish Advisory Subpanel

To: Pacific Fisheries Management Council

Re: H.10 2015-2016 Biennial Management Specifications 2015-
2016 Recreational Groundfish Fishery South of 34° 27’ N. Latitude

Updated request

This past year the Southern California commercial passenger vessel 
fleet has been hit especially hard by access restrictions.

We respectfully request that the council make an adjustment for 
the 15-16 Specs cycle of RCA lines allowing access to 50-60 
fathom bottom-fishing habitat for recreational anglers south of 
34° 27’ N. Latitude. We also hope the council considers in the 
future increasing the bag limit for bocaccio as an incidental by-
catch in this multi-species fishery as the stock biomass 
increases.

When the science supports having a 12-month season, the 
industry would encourage consideration of a January/February 
open period.

This is the difficult situation that confronts members of our fleet from 
Dana Point, Oceanside, Mission Bay and San Diego Bay.

In March of this year (2013), the CDFW mandated size limit on 
spotted sand bass, barred sand bass and calico bass was increased 
from 12 inches to 14 inches. This regulatory change immediately 
forced the fleet to a 95% live discard situation that will continue as the 
biomass alters its size profile over the next few years. Thousands of 
bass were discarded live, with few retained by anglers.

Barred sandbass and calico bass were the primary fall back target of 
these southern recreational fishing boats during the January and 
February rockfish closure.

In this present situation, until the size distribution of the bass 
population alters, this part of the fleet are left with few opportunities 
beyond sand dabs and scorpionfish during the January/February time 
frame.
For all of our fleet, access to the rockfish resource is already severely restricted due to existing CCA and RCA area closures. We have also recently been constrained by the movement (by in-season action) of the inshore RCA line from 60 to 50 fathoms.

In addition, the imposition of Marine Protected Areas in Southern California on the 1st of January, 2012 further restricted our fleets’ access to rockfish habitat.

Fifteen new Marine Protected Areas are closed to groundfishing along the mainland coast. Seven new closed areas at Catalina and San Nicholas Island are now closed to the recreational fleet. Furthermore, the north end of San Clemente Island is now a closed military area.

The commercial passenger vessel fleet has been hit especially hard by these combined access restrictions. The CPFV fleet is very concerned about the looming loss of their licensed captains as these trained and highly skilled folks may seek other employment and not return to the fleet.

We assert that the impact of moving the RCA line back to 60 fathoms for rockfish in the Southern California bight would not be sufficient to attain the 15/16 ACL and would have little chance of attaining future increased ACLs for this rapidly expanding population of bocaccio.

We maintain that our present restriction to waters shallower than 50 fathoms greatly restricts our access to the majority of the bocaccio population. Even liberalization of the restriction to 60 fathoms still restricts our access to much of the bocaccio biomass in this multi-species fishery.

We have demonstrated our proficiency at safely releasing cow cod in event of any encounters with this fish.

The latest Recfin data for cow cod in 2013 shows a by-catch of .85 metric tons, the majority of which our fleet releases to depth using recompression gear.

The 2012 data for the whole year shows a similar figure of .82 metric tons of cow cod by-catch.
In addition, the latest cow cod abundance indicators appear to be favorable, which would allow an increase in the ACL for this by-catch species. We are eagerly awaiting the results of the latest cow cod assessment to further inform this situation.

In summary, we respectfully request that the council make an adjustment of RCA lines allowing access to 50-60 fathom bottom-fishing habitat for recreational anglers south of 34° 27' N. Latitude, for the 15-16 Specs cycle. We also request the council consider increasing the bag limit for bocaccio as an incidental by-catch in this multi-species fishery as the stock biomass increases.

When the science supports having a 12-month season, the industry would encourage consideration of a January/February open period.