

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON COMMERCIAL
 TRIP LIMIT INCREASES FOR THE NEARSHORE FISHERY SOUTH OF 40°10' N.
 LATITUDE AND CHANGES TO NON-TRAWL RCA BOUNDARIES**

At its April 2016 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) recommended changes to the two-year allocation of yelloweye rockfish and changes to non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundaries as part of its Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA). This report provides additional details on both topics to help inform selection of a Final Preferred Alternative (FPA) at this meeting.

Nearshore Trip Limits South of 40°10' N lat.

As part of its PPA, the Council recommended increasing the allocation of yelloweye rockfish to the California nearshore fishery by 0.1 mt to 0.7 mt for 2017. This report summarizes the proposed trip limit alternatives for shallow and deeper nearshore rockfish south of 40°10' N lat. that may be afforded with this additional 0.1 mt of yelloweye rockfish.

For the current management cycle, California’s nearshore trip limits are provided in Table 1. Trip limits apply to both the limited entry and open access sectors.

Table 1. Trip limits (in pounds) for shallow and deeper nearshore rockfish south of 40°10' N lat. in 2016.

Sector	Period and Trip Limit (pounds)					
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6
Shallow NS RF South of 40°10'	600	Closed	800	900	800	1,000
Deeper NS RF 40°10' – 34°27'	700	Closed	700	900	900	1,000
Deeper NS RF South of 34°27'	500	Closed	600	900	900	1,000

Landings History

California’s nearshore fishery south of 40°10' N lat. has been constrained over the last decade due to the need to minimize bycatch of the overfished species (canary and yelloweye rockfishes). As a result, commercial landings for both the shallow and deeper nearshore rockfishes have averaged 10 percent or less of the minor nearshore rockfish ACL (Table 2).

Table 2. Landings summary (mt) of shallow and deeper nearshore rockfishes from 2011 to 2015 compared to recreational landings and the minor nearshore rockfish ACL, south of 40°10' N. lat.

Year	Comm. South of 40°10'	Rec. South of 40°10'	Total	ACL
2011	97.5	456.1	553.6	1,001
2012	87.0	476.8	563.8	990
2013	96.5	660.4	756.9	990
2014	97.9	663.7	761.6	1,161
2015	109.2	614.1	723.3	1,159

Commercial landings data source: PacFIN

Proposed Trip Limits

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) staff analyzed a range of higher trip limits for both shallow and deeper nearshore rockfish that would keep within the yelloweye rockfish limit of 0.7 mt. For deeper nearshore rockfish, one trip limit is proposed for the entire area south of 40°10' N lat. in 2017-18, unlike status quo where limits differ north and south of 34°27' N lat.

The nearshore model is a landings-based model which projects overfished species impacts based on expected landings of target species. Below 40°10' N lat, a combined shallow and deeper nearshore rockfish catch of up to 160 mt can be accommodated without exceeding the new yelloweye rockfish allocation. This represents about a 60 mt increase compared to recent catches under No Action. Estimated mortality of the proposed trip limits, including No Action, are presented in Tables 3-5. Should the Council recommend Alternative 2 (the highest trip limit alternative in each Table) the combined estimated mortality would be 138.3 mt, within the 160 mt limit.

Table 3. Trip limit alternatives for shallow nearshore rockfish south of 40°10' N lat. All trip limits are in pounds with the estimated mortality given in metric tons.

	Trip Limits (pounds)						Est. Mort.
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6	
No Action	600	Closed	800	900	800	1,000	55.6
Alt. 1	1,000	Closed	1,000 / 2 mo				68.1
Alt. 2	1,200	Closed	1,200 / 2 mo				81.8

Table 4. Trip limit alternatives for deeper nearshore rockfish between 40°10' N lat. and 34°27' N lat. All trip limits are in pounds with the estimated mortality given in metric tons.

	Trip Limits (pounds)						Est. Mort.
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6	
No Action	700	Closed	700	900	900	1,000	42.6
Alt. 1	950	Closed	950 / 2 mo				48.3
Alt. 2	1,000	Closed	1,000 / 2 mo				50.8

Table 5. Trip limit alternatives for deeper nearshore rockfish south of 34°27' N lat. All trip limits are in pounds with the estimated mortality given in metric tons.

	Trip Limits (pounds)						Est. Mort.
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6	
No Action	500	Closed	600	900	900	1,000	4.6
Alt. 1	950	Closed	950 / 2 mo				5.4
Alt. 2	1,000	Closed	1,000 / 2 mo				5.7

Impacts to OFS

CDFW expects that increases in impacts to other overfished species (e.g., to bocaccio, darkblotched and cowcod) could result from these proposed nearshore trip limit increases. Presuming the nearshore landings will increase, projections of increased mortality of these other overfished species are relatively insignificant. Impacts are available from the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program post-season, and are used to inform the nearshore model projections of future overfished species impacts under varying harvest levels. Table 6 displays projected mortality of overfished species under No Action and Alternative 2.

Table 6. Projected mortality (mt) of overfished species in the California nearshore fishery under No Action and Alternative 2.

Species	No Action	Alt.2
Bocaccio	0.6	0.7
Cowcod	0.0	0.0
Darkblotched	0.1	0.1
Yelloweye	0.6	0.7

CDFW recommends increasing trip limits for both shallow and deeper nearshore rockfish to 1,200 lb/2 months (shallow) and 1,000 lb/2 months (deeper) (Alternative 2; Table 3-5) for the entire area south of 40°10' N lat.

Non-Trawl RCA Boundary Modification Considerations for California

Two non-trawl RCA boundary modifications are proposed for the 2017-2018 management cycle to provide better harvest opportunity for the shelf rockfish fishery. The first is a seaward boundary change from 150 fm to 125 fm between 40°10' N lat. and 34°27' N lat. The second is a shoreward boundary change from 60 fm to 75 fm south of 34°27' N lat.

These RCA boundary changes are expected to offer additional access to fishing grounds that may allow for better attainment of underutilized stocks. These changes are being proposed in response to public comment supporting opening additional areas to fishing where possible, in order to alleviate crowding in desirable fishing areas. CDFW notes that this management measure does have the potential, particularly in the area south of 34° 27' N lat., to increase encounters with cowcod if there is increased catch of target species or participating vessels.

CDFW anticipates any increased encounters to be minimal, but could be easily accommodated within the cowcod non-trawl allocation of 2.6 mt for 2017-18. Projected impacts from the recreational sector total 2.2 mt, and prior WCGOP cowcod mortality estimates for all non-trawl commercial fishery sources have not exceeded 0.01 mt in recent years.