

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PRELIMINARY  
PREFERRED MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR 2019-2020

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) offers the following recommendations for Council consideration in identifying preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) management measures for 2019-2020.

**Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCA)**

*Revisions to Waypoints*

CDFW supports a number of minor adjustments to RCA waypoints off California to better approximate corresponding depth contours as shown in Agenda item F.5, Attachment 2, pages 44-53. CDFW notes that several of these revisions (identified below) were previously discussed in April and June 2017 when corrections were adopted to the 125 fm line in California.

- The 75 fm depth contour is proposed to be modified at Santa Cruz Island in southern California.
- The 100 fm depth contour is proposed to be modified in the following northern California areas:
  - Spanish Canyon
  - Delgada Canyon
- The 125 fm depth contour is proposed to be modified in the following areas:
  - Delgada Canyon in northern California,
  - Cordell Bank northwest of San Francisco,
  - Point Ano Nuevo in central California,
  - San Miguel Island in southern California,
  - Anacapa Island in southern California.
- The 150 fm depth contour is proposed to be modified in the following southern California areas:
  - San Miguel Island
  - Anacapa Island in southern California

*Commercial Non-trawl RCA between 42° and 40°10' North latitude*

CDFW supports modifying the seaward boundary of the non-trawl RCA from 100 fm to 75 fm in the area between 42° and 40°10' N. lat. This modification would provide more opportunity to access healthy stocks (widow, canary, and yellowtail rockfish) by allowing access to depths in which they are most prevalent.

Some concern has been raised about the potential for increased interactions with yelloweye rockfish in this area given RCAs are intended to reduce the chance of contacting overfished species such as yelloweye rockfish. As noted in Appendix C (Agenda item F.5, Attachment 2), the preferred habitat for yelloweye rockfish is rocky outcrops and pinnacles and a majority (99.7%) of the predicted seabed habitat in the area to be reopened is soft muddy bottom. Although yelloweye rockfish have been found over soft muddy bottom near rocky outcrops, movement away

from rocky outcrops tends to be minimal. Moreover, widow, canary and yellowtail rockfish often aggregate in the midwater column over soft muddy bottom in depths that would be reopened under this proposal (Agenda item F.5, Attachment 2). Given the low likelihood of encountering yelloweye rockfish in this area, and high likelihood of increasing access to healthy target stocks, CDFW supports this management measure.

#### *Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA) Depth Restrictions*

CDFW supports increasing the allowable fishing depths for commercial fixed gear and recreational fisheries in the Western CCA to 40 fm. With the significant improvement in the 2013 stock status, total mortality far below the ACL in recent years, and NMFS hook-and-line survey data demonstrating zero cowcod impacts in the depths and region being proposed for opening, CDFW sees minimal risk of exceeding the cowcod ACT - let alone the cowcod ACL - as a result of this action.

### **Recreational Fishery**

#### *Season Structure*

CDFW has not identified a complete PPA for recreational seasons and depths at this time. CDFW will continue to work with the GAP and other industry representatives to design a recreational season that maximizes opportunity and prioritizes time on the water.

#### California scorpionfish

CDFW supports allowing retention of California scorpionfish through December 31, which would result in a year-round fishery opportunity for this species.

#### *Bag Limits*

Canary – CDFW recommends a two fish sub-bag limit for canary rockfish. In March 2018, the Council recommended an inseason action to increase the canary rockfish sub-bag limit from one fish to two fish. This action is expected to become effective in mid-April. CDFW notes that higher limits were analyzed in the 2017-2018 SPEX process, and could further increase the canary sub-bag limit via future inseason actions pending new information on progress of the fishery.

Lingcod – CDFW recommends reducing the bag limit from two fish to one fish south of 40°10' N latitude to keep mortality within the non-trawl allocation based on the most recent stock assessment results. No changes are proposed to the bag limit north of 40°10' N latitude. The statewide size limit would remain 22" total length.

Cabezon – In effort to reduce regulatory complexity, CDFW recommends eliminating the sub-bag limit for cabezon within the 10-fish RGC bag limit.