

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON FUTURE
MEETING AGENDAS AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) recommends scheduling the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) and Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA) boundaries scoping item on the Year-At-A-Glance agenda for September 2020.

The Council has received comments from a broad range of California constituents and representatives asking to agendize this item now. CDFW agrees and finds this to be a top priority among the discretionary groundfish items in the queue, as the action is likely to provide relief to a large and diverse number of interests reliant on opportunities for non-trawl fishery sectors. Moreover, for those Trawl Individual Quota participants who elect to gear switch and yet are bound by the non-trawl RCA, modifications to the non-trawl RCA would offer some new opportunities for this sector as well. Now that we have rebuilt most overfished groundfish stocks, it is time to undertake a planning process that aims to increase access to fishing areas that have been closed for two decades in order to minimize contact with overfished species.

The Council's biennial specifications and management measure process is expected to conclude in June, and NMFS and Council staff will continue to shoulder the workload associated with regulations that are expected to be effective January 1, 2021. CDFW recognizes that Council and NMFS staff resources are stretched thin, but believes September is a reasonable time to schedule the highest priority discretionary items from the groundfish prioritization list. CDFW expects the process of considering non-trawl area boundaries to be lengthy and analytically intensive in order to ensure future non-trawl management ensures accountability and continues to allow for rebuilding of overfished stocks, but believes it is time to get that process underway.