

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PRELIMINARY
PREFERRED MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR 2021-2022 FISHERIES

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) offers the following recommendations for Council consideration as preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) management measures for the 2021-2022 biennium.

The current public health crisis associated with COVID-19 has resulted in immediate economic hardships for all California (and coastwide) fisheries in 2020. Specific to the recommendations below, CDFW anticipates further discussion will be needed with stakeholders between now and June to inform the Council's final actions. CDFW also anticipates the need for these discussions to continue beyond June, and that inseason actions may be appropriate to address changing needs, new opportunities, or new hardships as they arise in the new biennium.

Cowcod ACT Limit South of 40° 10' N. Lat.

CDFW supports a PPA Fishery ACT amount of 50 metric tons which takes into consideration the uncertainty associated with the stock assessment output and is consistent with the recommendation that came from the Stock Assessment Team to choose a level that sums the low state of nature value from the decision table for south of Pt. Conception (38.7 mt) with the portion of the stock north of Pt. Conception (11.4 mt). This ACT, reduced from the ACL value of 84 MT in 2021 and 82 MT in 2022 adopted by the Council under the Agenda Item G.4, will afford precaution that will continue to ensure the long-term health of the stock until more information is available to inform a future stock assessment. This measure is intended to balance the continued conservation needs of the now-healthy cowcod stock while offering more fishing opportunities for other shelf fishery stocks that have been limited for many years in order to minimize cowcod encounters, and the need to close a significant portion of California's shelf waters where this species resides.

CDFW supports the status quo trawl (36 percent) and non-trawl (64 percent) allocation proportions for cowcod. At the PPA 50 mt ACT level, the trawl sector can expect to see further increases to Annual Vessel Quota Pound Limits. Concerns that were raised by IQ participants in central California in 2019 that prompted Council action recommending removal of the 2019 and 2020 cowcod ACT should be significantly if not completely alleviated with the vessel quota pound amounts that will be available beginning in 2021.

For the non-trawl sectors that will operate within a significantly larger non-trawl cowcod allocation south of 40°10' N. lat., relaxation of Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) depth constraints is expected. CDFW supports utilizing a 50:50 sharing arrangement within the non-trawl sectors (Limited Entry and Open Access [LE/OA] and recreational) as an equitable starting point, recognizing that retention in the non-trawl sector will continue to be prohibited, except

under the proposed the proposed Exempted Fishery Permit for participating California Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessels.

Minor Rockfish Conservation Area Boundary Modifications

CDFW continues to support RCA boundary line modifications for both the non-trawl LE/OA and recreational sectors as proposed in [November \(Agenda Item H.8.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, November 2019\)](#), which articulates both the rationale for and analysis of expected impacts of these minor depth adjustments. The expected increased impacts to both target and rebuilding stocks (yelloweye rockfish) are projected to remain under the proposed harvest limits and do not present any conservation concerns.

RCA Waypoint Corrections

CDFW supports the proposals to modify RCA waypoints off California to better approximate corresponding depth contours for the 40 fathom line off central CA, and the 100 fathom line in southern CA as outlined in the following reports: [Agenda Item H.8.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, September 2019](#); and [Agenda Item H.4.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, March 2020](#). These recommendations are based on discussions from the November 2019 and March 2020 Council meetings and are intended to implement the most accurate representation of the contour bathymetry to allow fishing opportunity in intended depths.

Commercial Non-Trawl Trip Limit Adjustments

CDFW supports making comprehensive modifications to the LE/OA trip limits and tables in order to allow increased attainment of underutilized shelf rockfish species and is expected to improve the economic benefit to the fixed gear fleet. CDFW will continue to solicit input from stakeholders to formulate recommendations on these trip limit alternatives for final action at the June Council meeting.

Recreational Fishery

CDFW supports the preliminary season structure and associated depth limits as shown in Table 1. The proposed RCA boundary modifications extend the Mendocino Management area from 20 fathoms to 30 fathoms from May 1 through October 31, the San Francisco Management Area from 40 fathoms to 50 fathoms from April 1 through December 31, and the Southern Management Area from 75 fathom to 100 fathoms from March 1 through December 31. The projected impacts from these proposed changes are not expected to exceed target and rebuilding stock (yelloweye rockfish) harvest limits.

Table 1. Proposed CA recreational season structure and RCA depth boundaries by Management Area and month.

Management Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Northern	Closed				May 1 – Oct 31 <30fm						All Depth	
Mendocino	Closed				May 1 – Oct 31 <30fm						All Depth	
San Francisco	Closed			April 1 – Dec 31 <50fm								
Central	Closed			April 1 – Dec 31 <50fm								
Southern	Closed		Mar 1 – Dec 31 <100 fm									

Sub-Bag Limits

CDFW supports eliminating the current sub-bag limits for black rockfish, canary rockfish, and cabezon. Catch of these species would continue to be included within the aggregate Rockfish, Greenling, Cabezon (RGC) 10-fish daily bag limit. These recommendations are expected to reduce regulatory complexity, provide additional fishing opportunity to allow for better achievement of established harvest limits and do not pose any conservation concerns.

For vermilion rockfish, CDFW is supportive of implementing a 5 fish sub-bag limit within the RCG 10-fish daily bag limit, following the analysis provided in the April briefing book ([Agenda Item G.6.a, CDFW Report 1, April 2020](#)). This new measure is expected to reduce catch of vermilion rockfish in the recreational sector in the next biennium, while acknowledging the importance of this species as a target stock. CDFW expects to revisit this limit in the next regulatory cycle with the hope that a new stock assessment will be available to inform future management.

CDFW will continue to work with the Groundfish Advisory Sub-panel (GAP) members and other industry representatives to solidify recommendations in preparation of final action at the June Council meeting.