

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE INSEASON REPORT ON 2021 NEARSHORE GROUND FISH FISHERIES

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) provides the following report on recreational and commercial nearshore groundfish fisheries in Oregon. The purpose is to inform the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) on the status of these fisheries through the first five months of 2021, including inseason adjustments to state rules for the recreational fishery following unusually high effort in April. ODFW is not proposing any action by the Council or the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Recreational and commercial nearshore fisheries for black, blue/deacon, and nearshore rockfish; cabezon; and greenling are managed and monitored by ODFW. Sector- and species-specific harvest guidelines (HG) and other measures are adopted by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) to provide opportunity to attain, but not exceed, the state's share of federal harvest specifications. ODFW monitors the fisheries inseason and adjusts management measures via temporary state rule when necessary to meet conservation and/or fishery objectives.

Recreational Fishery

ODFW monitors and manages the Oregon recreational bottomfish (groundfish) fishery via data from the [Ocean Recreational Boat Survey](#) (ORBS) program. Effort, catch, and discard estimates are available monthly, on a one month lag; however, preliminary estimates are available seven to ten days after the end of a statistical month. ODFW staff regularly review preliminary estimates and consult with marine sportfishing advisors to determine whether inseason changes to bag limits or other state measures are needed.

Initial Fishery Structure and Regulations

For 2021, the OFWC adopted a six fish daily bag limit for general marine species (up from five in 2019 and 2020), and again adopted a one-fish sub-bag limit for China, copper, and quillback rockfish in aggregate, and a one-fish sub-bag limit and season opening July 1 for cabezon. For nearshore rockfish, only China, copper, and quillback rockfish are included in the sub-bag limit because they make up over 95 percent of the catch of the complex as a whole in Oregon and are relatively easy for most anglers to identify. Modeling by ODFW projected that even with these sub-bag limits, the state recreational HGs for Nearshore Rockfish and cabezon would be met in mid-summer, as in recent years; therefore, inseason action to prohibit retention was anticipated.

Inseason Season Tracking and Progress

Oregon's 2021 recreational groundfish season began with about average effort and landings in January through March. However, April had an explosion of effort with just over 18,000 bottomfish angler trips, compared to around 5,500 in an average April (Figure 1). This is the highest recreational bottomfish effort in any non-summer month on record for Oregon. The spike was due to a combination of very good weather and ocean conditions for most of the month and the expansion of interest and capacity for outdoor recreation seen in 2020. Catch of black rockfish was almost 53 mt in April 2021, compared an average of approximately 20 mt (Figure 2). Catch of other species, such as nearshore rockfish and lingcod, was also higher than average for April.

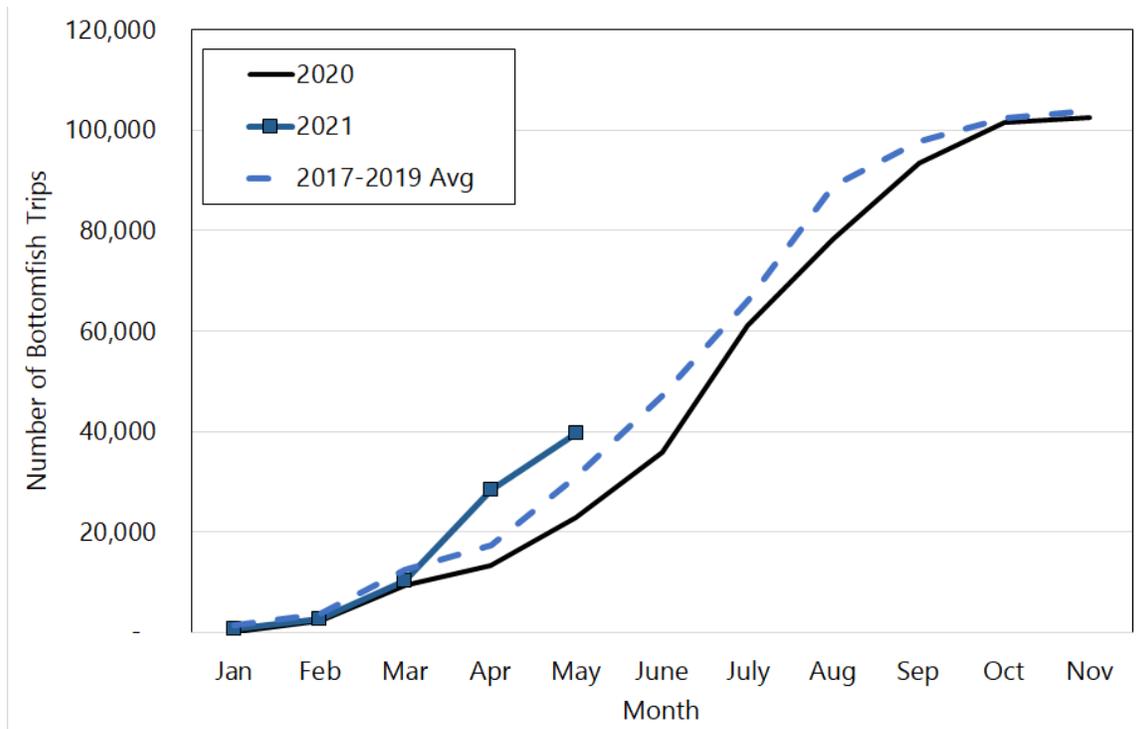


Figure 1. Cumulative number of angler trips in Oregon’s recreational groundfish fishery, 2017-2021.

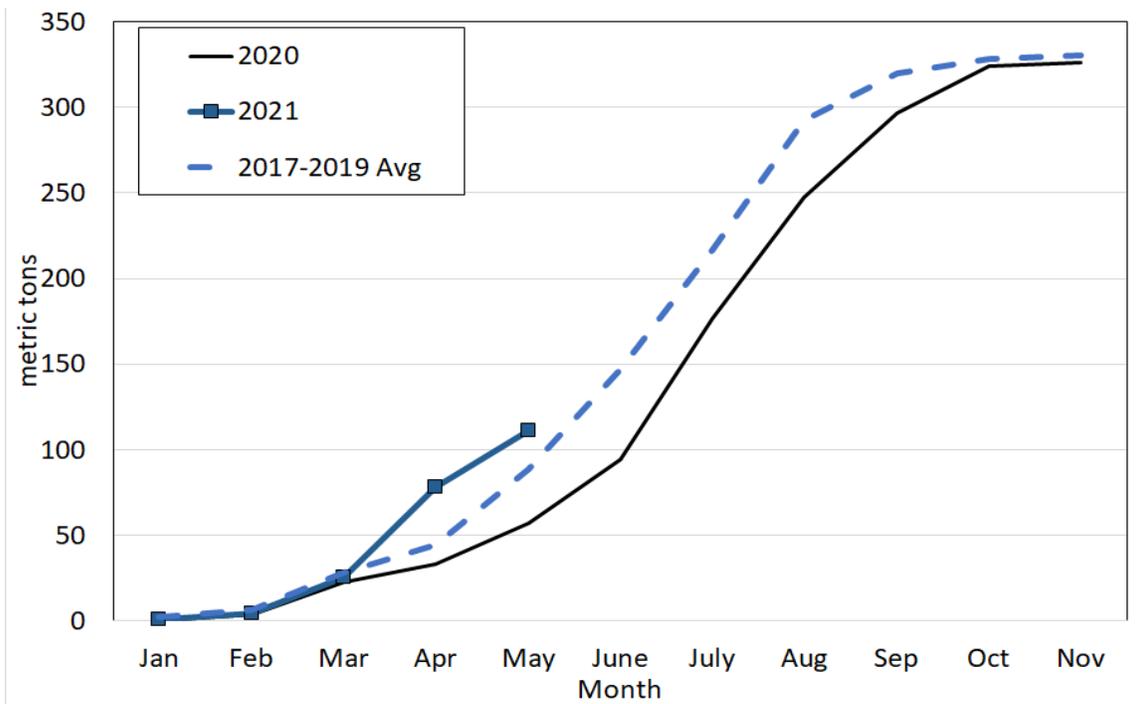


Figure 2. Cumulative black rockfish catch (mt) in Oregon’s recreational groundfish fishery, 2017-2021.

Beginning in mid-April, ODFW began receiving phone calls and emails from advisors, anglers, and charter businesses expressing concerns about the amount of effort and catch, and how it might impact the 2021 season. On May 5, ODFW held a web meeting with our marine sportfishing advisors to discuss the April effort, expectations for the coming months, and options for inseason adjustments. Based on input from the advisors and others, ODFW reduced the daily general marine bag limit to five fish beginning May 10¹, to stay within the Oregon recreational HG of several species, especially black rockfish, and avoid a season closure prior to December 31.

Winds and waves picked up for the first half of May, bringing effort down to or below average levels. However, catch of China, copper, and quillback rockfish continued to be higher than anticipated, and projections indicated the state HG would be exceeded unless action was taken. Therefore, ODFW announced on May 27² that retention of these species by boat-based anglers would be prohibited beginning on June 1, 2021. Shore-based anglers in Oregon rarely encounter these species, and estimated shore-based mortality is accounted for off the top in ODFW's projections. Following the general marine bag limit reduction and the prohibition on China, copper, and quillback rockfish, ODFW projects that year-end impacts to nearshore rockfish, including discard mortality, will be very close to the state recreational HG.

ODFW met with its sportfishing advisors again on June 8 to discuss the season through May and expectations for effort levels over the summer. Opportunities for salmon, particularly coho salmon, and albacore tuna will influence bottomfish effort; however, it is too early yet to tell whether/how much effort might be drawn away from bottomfish by those other opportunities.

ODFW will continue to review preliminary data and projections, consult our sportfishing advisors, and evaluate the need for additional state action throughout the season to remain within the sector's state allocations and meet fishery objectives. ODFW is not asking for concurrent federal action relative to the state rule changes already made, as Oregon's inseason temporary rule process is sufficient, flexible, and timely.

Commercial Fishery – Nearshore Species

The following information about commercial nearshore effort, landings, and ex-vessel revenue is provided to complement the recreational fishery update. The activity reported below comes from 93 total vessels, 67 of which have a state-issued permit for Oregon's commercial nearshore fishery, in which participants target black rockfish, blue and deacon rockfish, nearshore rockfish, cabezon, and/or greenling with hook and line gears and are subject to state HGs and trip limits. Lingcod is not among the species restricted by the state's commercial nearshore permits; however, it is an important target for federal open access nearshore fishermen and is included in this report.

From January 1 through June 4, 2021, landings of key nearshore species combined totaled 98.7 mt, for a total ex-vessel revenue of \$626,315. Landings by species or complex, and the relative proportion of each, are shown in Table 1.

¹ https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2021/05_May/050621.asp

² https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2021/05_May/052721b.asp

Table 1. Round weight in metric tons of the major nearshore species landed in Oregon with hook and line (Dahl Codes 5 & 6) in 2021 through June 4. Source: PacFIN 6/4/21.

	Black Rockfish	Blue and Deacon Rockfish	Cabazon	Greenling	Nearshore Rockfish Complex	Lingcod
Landings (mt)	40.69	1.46	10.06	5.73	5.82	35.52
Percent of total landings	41%	1%	10%	6%	6%	36%

Commercial nearshore effort was relatively low in the first three months of 2021 due to challenging weather and ocean conditions. However, in April effort increased significantly, with 472 trips being taken compared to the 258 trips in April 2020, and approximately double the number of trips in April 2019 (146 trips; Figure 3). The spike in April 2021 is similar to that seen in the recreational fishery, and was likely also due to good weather and ocean conditions for most of the month.

Effort in the First Five Months of 2019-2021

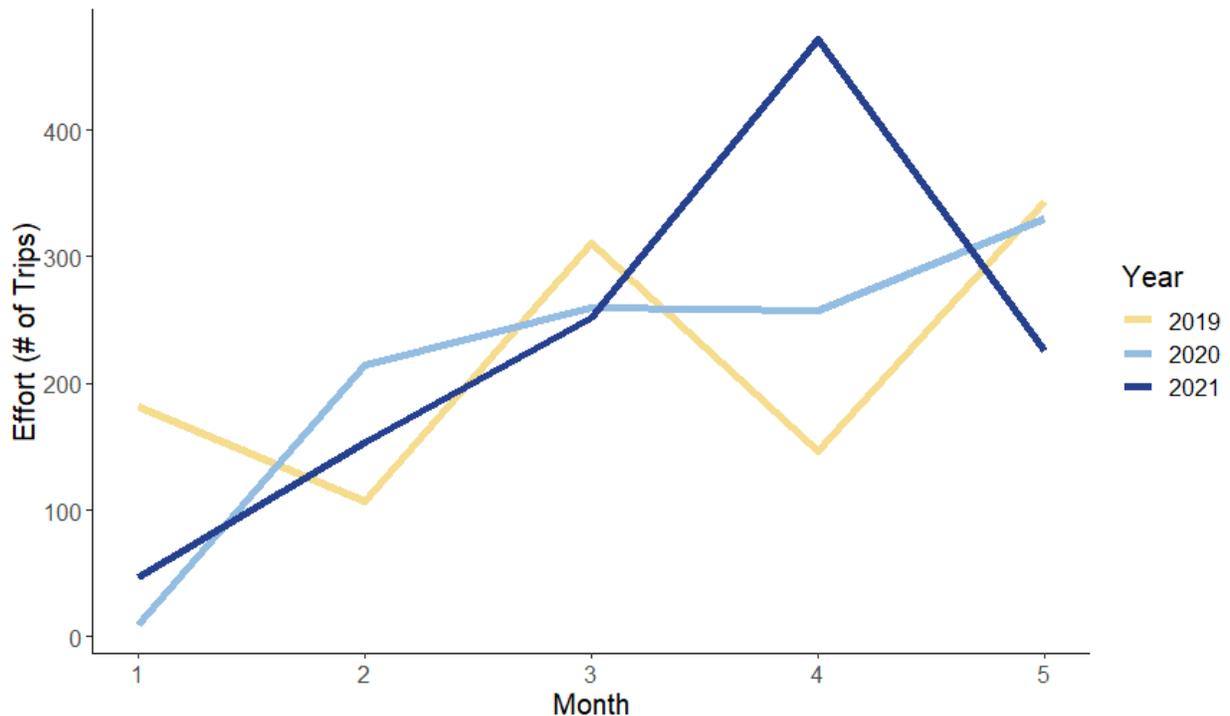


Figure 3. Commercial nearshore effort by month (calculated using fish ticket numbers per day as a trip), 2019-2021. Source: PacFIN 6/4/21.

ODFW regularly reviews fish ticket data, evaluates progress toward the commercial sector’s state HGs, and consult stakeholder advisors and ODFW port biologists on fishery dynamics. State trip

limits are adjusted inseason when needed. Because of the limited number of Oregon commercial nearshore permits, there is less uncertainty in catch projections compared to the recreational sector. No inseason changes to state rules for the state-managed commercial nearshore fishery have been occurred to date in 2021, but will be implemented if needed. Total year-end commercial impacts are expected to be within state HGs.

Recreational and commercial catch through approximately the end of May are shown in Table 2, along with the combined percent attainment of Oregon’s federal allocations for the stocks/stock complexes listed. At this time, combined recreational and commercial impacts are expected to be within federal allocations to Oregon.

Table 2. Recreational and commercial harvest (in mt) of select nearshore species in Oregon through the end of May, and percent attainment of Oregon’s federal allocation. Shaded cells indicate species that are part of a complex. Sources: PacFIN 5/31/2021 & ODFW internal recreational tracking

Species	Recreational Impacts	Commercial Landings	Combined Recreational & Commercial Impacts	2021 Federal Allocation to Oregon	Approximate % Attainment through May
Black Rockfish	111.0	40.15	151.2	512 a/	29.5%
Blue/Deacon Rockfish	4.87	1.46	6.33	90.5 a/	7%
Black/ Blue/Deacon Rockfish Complex	115.9	41.62	157.5	602.5 b/	26.1%
Nearshore Rockfish Complex North of 40° 10' N lat.	6.8	5.81	12.6	22.1 c/	57.0%
Cabazon	1.06	9.84	10.9	54.4 a/	20.0%
Greenlings	1.52	5.72	7.24	143.9 a/	5.0%
Greenlings/ Cabazon Complex	2.58	15.56	18.1	198.3 b/	9.1%

a/ Species-specific contribution to the complex annual catch limit

b/ Annual catch limit for Oregon

c/ Oregon share of the annual catch limit