

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON THE 2022
RECREATIONAL BOTTOMFISH FISHERY AND POTENTIAL ADJUSTMENT FOR 2023.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) monitors and manages the Oregon recreational bottomfish (groundfish) fishery inseason via data from the [Ocean Recreational Boat Survey](#) (ORBS) program. Effort, catch, and discard data are available monthly, on a one-month lag; however preliminary data may be available approximately ten days after the end of a statistical month. Additionally raw interview data may be available weekly to discern trends in effort and catch rates.

2022 Recreational Bottomfish Fishery

The 2022 recreational bottomfish fishery off of Oregon has been successful for many anglers. Effort and catches have been higher than the Oregon recreational model estimated for all months except May. Total effort through August is just behind the highest recorded year of 2017. During the busy summer months of June, July, and August, effort and catches, particularly of black rockfish, have been 22-40 percent higher than estimated pre-season (Figure 1). This is even with a very strong coho salmon season along much of the Oregon coast and relatively decent albacore tuna fishing opportunities through much of August.

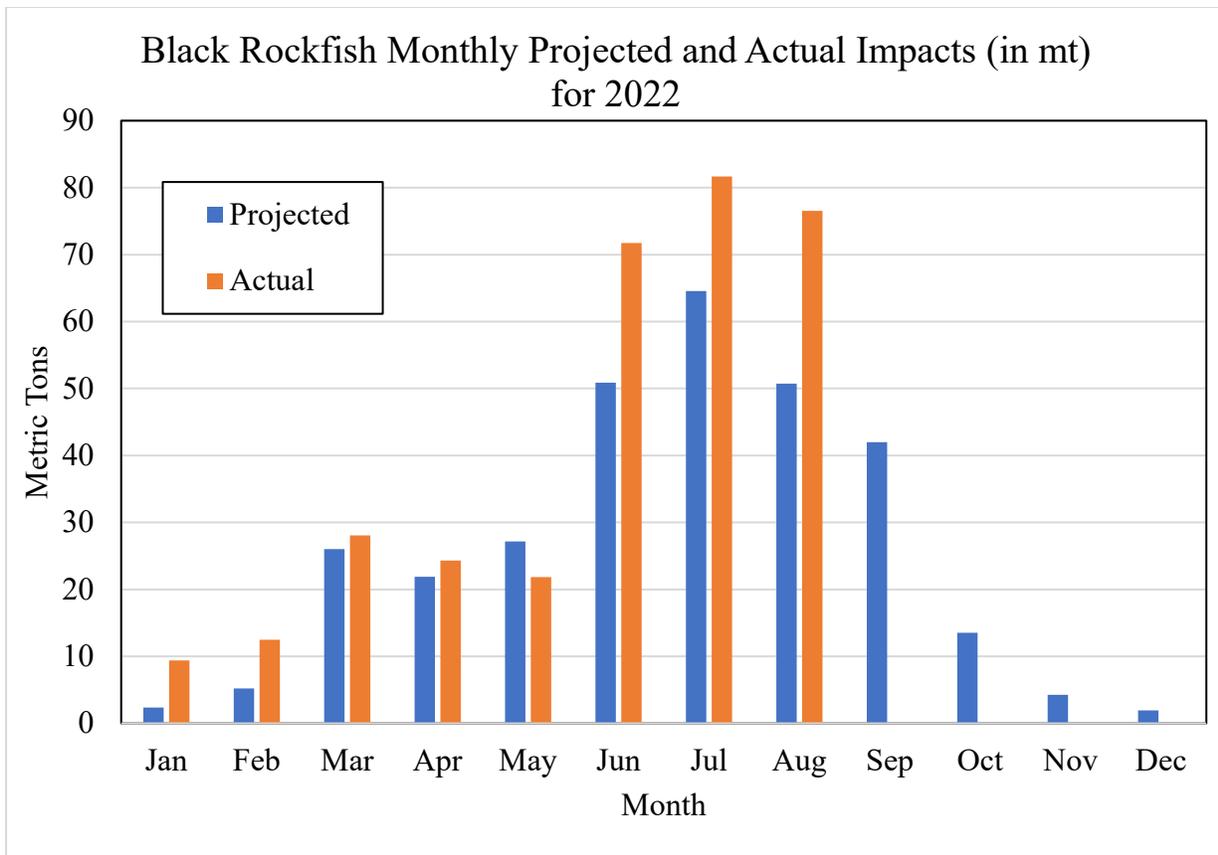


Figure 1. Black rockfish projected and actual monthly impacts (in mt) for the Oregon recreational bottomfish fishery in 2022.

Based on final data through June and preliminary July data, ODFW staff had concerns about continued high effort through the remainder of the summer (and year) and being able to stay within species-specific state or federal harvest guidelines. In early August staff conferred with our advisory group about the progress of the fishery and their thoughts on how August would proceed. The advisors requested waiting to see how the first couple of weeks of August proceeded before deciding to take any action. The first two weeks ended up having even higher effort and catches than ODFW staff anticipated. After the third week in August of continued high effort, ODFW decided that inseason action would be necessary to keep the fishery open through the end of the year while not exceeding any harvest guidelines.

After further consultation with and guidance from the advisors, ODFW took action, through state regulations, to reduce the daily general marine bag limit from five down to four and prohibit retention of cabezon, China and copper rockfishes beginning Tuesday, September 6, 2022¹.

Black rockfish makes up the majority of catch in the Oregon recreational bottomfish fishery (70-80 percent by number). Therefore, to reduce the impacts (landings and discard mortality) the daily bag limit had to be reduced. ODFW staff and our advisors did discuss the potential for a 4-fish sub-bag limit on black rockfish. However, when there was a black rockfish sub-bag limit several years ago, there was an increase in discard mortality of black rockfish as anglers tried to fill out

¹ https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2022/08_Aug/082622.asp

their daily bag limit with other species. That would be exacerbated this year with also having to go to no retention of China and copper rockfish, and the previous prohibition on quillback rockfish. Anglers would likely have to sort through some of those species while attempting to fill out their five fish bag limit. Therefore, to reduce the discard mortality on black, China, copper, and quillback rockfishes, reducing the daily bag limit is the most responsible option.

Since announcing the inseason changes, the preliminary full-month August estimates have become available. The data through August indicates that the state-specified Oregon recreational harvest guideline for the nearshore rockfish complex species has been exceeded (Table 1). Non-retention through the remainder of the year is estimated to have an additional 0.9 mt of impacts due to discard mortality. Currently the Oregon commercial sectors are projected to end the year below its state-specified harvest guideline. Combined Oregon recreational and commercial impacts for 2022 are currently projected to be 21.6 mt, out of the 21.8 mt Oregon share of the Nearshore Rockfish Complex north of 40° 10' N lat. annual catch limit (ACL). ODFW will be consulting with Washington and California to see how their fisheries are tracking for this complex, to ensure that there is minimal threat of exceeding the complex ACL for 2022.

Table 1. 2022 Oregon recreational bottomfish fishery preliminary estimated impacts through August, projected end of year impacts, and harvest guidelines (in mt). *Italics indicates a species-specific information for a species within a complex. (Estimates made on 6 September 2022)*

Species	Harvest Guideline	Impacts through Aug	Projected end of year impacts
<i>Black rockfish</i>	<i>389.1</i>	<i>326.1</i>	<i>400.1</i>
Oregon black/ blue /deacon rockfish complex	460.3	342.0	420.3
Nearshore rockfish complex	10.5	11.5	12.4
<i>Cabazon</i>	<i>18.6</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>17.2</i>
Oregon cabazon/ kelp greenling complex	53.0	38.1	40.2
Canary rockfish	63.6 a/	38.4	48.8
Yelloweye rockfish	7.0 a/	3.4	4.5

a/ Canary and yelloweye rockfish are federal harvest guidelines specified for the Oregon recreational fishery. All other harvest guidelines are state-specified harvest guidelines.

ODFW will continue to track landings and discard mortality through the end of the year and may have to take further inseason action.

ODFW is not requesting concurrent federal action at this time.

2023 Oregon Recreational Bottomfish

The 2023-2024 Oregon recreational bottomfish fishery has been set-up through the biennial harvest specifications and management measures process federally. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) will finalize the state regulations for 2023 at their December 2022 meeting. ODFW staff will be reaching out to the public in early October to get input on the season structure and regulations, within what is in the federal regulations. Much of the discussion will likely focus on the effort and catches that occurred in 2022, and what that might mean for 2023 effort and catches.

During the discussion with advisors about the 2022 inseason regulation changes, there were several discussions about the longleader gear (Holloway Gear) fishery and how to entice more anglers to pursue that fishery. This would reduce effort on the nearshore reefs and the more nearshore stocks such as black, China, copper, and quillback rockfishes. As part of that discussion, ODFW staff were asked about the potential for increasing the longleader gear fishery daily bag limit, currently ten fish² in both state and federal regulations, to twelve or fifteen fish per day.

A ten fish bag limit is the highest limit that has been analyzed as part of any biennial harvest specifications and management measures process. However, the original exempted fishing permit was conducted with a fifteen fish bag limit, as was the analysis conducted for the Environmental Assessment³ of the longleader gear fishery. Therefore, there is some information to inform what potential impacts to yelloweye rockfish, as well as Chinook and coho salmon would be.

Impacts to most target species (e.g., yellowtail and widow rockfishes) would be well within the non-trawl allocation and present virtually no threat to exceeding the ACL of any of those species. Blue, deacon, and canary rockfishes are the only species that have harvest guidelines, or shares, specified for the Oregon recreational fishery. Recent total impacts have been well below the species-specific contribution of blue/deacon rockfish to the Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish complex, and the recreational impacts have been well below the state-specified recreational harvest guideline. Even tripling the blue/deacon rockfish impacts would not approach that species-specific contribution to the complex ACL.

The Oregon recreational impacts to canary rockfish have been closer to the Oregon recreational share of the non-trawl harvest guideline (~70-80 percent) over the last 3 years. Total mortality from all non-trawl sectors has been well below the non-trawl HG, therefore there would be little risk to that HG (total mortality was 48 percent of the HG in 2021)⁴ or the ACL (42 percent in 2021) from this action. Impacts to canary rockfish will be tracked carefully to ensure that the Oregon recreational share of the non-trawl harvest guideline is not exceeded. An example of an inseason action that could be taken to keep impacts within the Oregon recreational share would be to implement a sub-bag limit for canary rockfish in the longleader gear and/or regular bottomfish fishery.

2023 Inseason Request

The request is to increase the longleader gear fishery daily bag limit to fifteen (or twelve) fish per angler per day, of only the ten rockfish species allowed. Lingcod retention would continue to be prohibited, and the fishery would remain restricted to seaward of the 40-fathom regulatory line.

² Of ten midwater rockfish species only: yellowtail, widow, canary, redstripe, greenstriped, silverygray, chilipepper, blue, deacon, and bocaccio rockfishes.

³ https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/midwater_recreational_fishery_authorization_ea_1.pdf

⁴ <https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2022/08/g-1-a-supplemental-nmfs-report-1-nmfs-report-on-recently-published-groundfish-rulemakings-workload.pdf/>