

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS FOR 2023

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) provides the following update regarding quillback rockfish in the California non-trawl groundfish fishery during 2023.

State Action

CDFW tracks take of quillback rockfish inseason for recreational and non-trawl commercial fisheries.

On July 26, 2023 CDFW consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to discuss updated catch information through July 23. Following the discussion, CDFW took state action to prohibit retention of quillback rockfish in both the recreational and commercial Deeper Nearshore Species fishery statewide. CDFW issued a [press release](#) (see pages 2-4) announcing the changes that took effect August 7, 2023.

On August 1, 2023, CDFW consulted with Groundfish Advisory Subpanel representatives and interested stakeholders to discuss quillback rockfish take-to-date, the action to prohibit retention of quillback rockfish in California's fisheries, and the potential need to take additional action(s) in 2023 to further reduce mortality. A handout (see pages 5-8) with the most recent data available was provided to inform the discussion.



CDFW NEWS

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Quillback Rockfish Retention Prohibited **Statewide, Effective Aug. 7**

Retention of quillback rockfish (*Sebastes maliger*) is prohibited statewide in both the recreational and commercial fisheries effective Aug. 7, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) announced today.

CDFW projects the combined recreational and commercial take of quillback rockfish will exceed the harvest limits specified in federal regulation for 2023, and in-season action must occur to reduce the risk of overfishing. Pursuant to California Code of Regulations Title 14, section 27.20(e), when federal harvest limits are projected to be exceeded, CDFW has authority to make in-season changes, including adjustments to bag and sub-bag limits.

The 2021 stock assessment for [quillback rockfish](#) off California indicated severe population declines. As a result, a recreational one-fish limit and reduced commercial limits were implemented in 2022 to reduce catch. Further constraints to the groundfish seasons for 2023 have not sufficiently reduced catch for quillback rockfish to meet federal harvest guidelines.

CDFW urges anglers to use best fishing practices to reduce impacts to quillback rockfish and other prohibited species. These include reducing mortality when releasing fish by utilizing a [descending device](#) and relocating to different fishing grounds or switching targets if you are catching and releasing quillback rockfish or other prohibited species.

The Rockfish, Cabezon, Greenling (RCG) complex bag and possession limit will remain 10 fish daily, with a one fish sub-bag limit for copper rockfish, and a four fish sub-bag limit for vermilion rockfish. Along with quillback rockfish, take of bronzed-spotted rockfish, cowcod and yelloweye rockfish continue to be prohibited year-round at all depths.

To better assist anglers with identifying rockfish species while fishing, CDFW has prepared [informational flyers](#) to distinguish [quillback rockfish](#) from similar looking species, such as China and black-and-yellow rockfish. Additional fish identification materials on rockfish and other species can be found on [CDFW's Fish and Shellfish Identification web page](#).

CDFW will continue to monitor groundfish species of concern, such as quillback rockfish. If the current in-season change prohibiting take of quillback rockfish is not sufficient to reduce harvest, additional in-season actions such as modifications to the season dates and/or depth constraints may be implemented. Anglers are strongly encouraged to minimize catch of quillback rockfish and other prohibited species to reduce the possibility of further in-season actions in 2023 and beyond. CDFW recommends reviewing the [Summary of Recreational Groundfish Fishing Regulations](#) web page before each trip to ensure anglers are up to date on the most recent groundfish regulations.

For information on groundfish fishery science, management and other [frequently asked questions](#), please visit [CDFW's Marine Region Groundfish web page](#).

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Persons with disabilities needing reasonable accommodation to participate in public meetings or other CDFW activities are invited to contact CDFW's Accessibility Coordinator at (916) 651-1214, the EEO Office at (916) 653-9089, or send an email to EEO@wildlife.ca.gov. Reasonable Accommodation requests for facility and/or meeting accessibility should be received at least 21 days prior to the event. Requests for American Sign Language Interpreters should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event, and requests for Real-Time Captioning at least four weeks prior to the event. These timeframes are to help ensure that the requested accommodation is met. If a request for an accommodation has been submitted but due to circumstances is no longer needed, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator immediately.

Aug. 1 Industry Meeting Handout

Quillback Rockfish Best Estimate of Take To-Date

This handout was prepared for the August 1, 2023 California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) call with California Groundfish Advisory Sub-Panel representatives and other interested parties to help inform discussions of quillback rockfish take to-date in California and the need to take inseason action to limit mortality. Very low harvest reference points exist for quillback rockfish (Table 1) in California for 2023. Recreational catch data are comprised of monthly estimates from January through May, Anticipated Catch Values (ACVs) from June 1 through July 23, and raw sample data for 2023. Commercial landings data are through July 24.

Harvest Specifications and Total Take to Date

Table 1. Area-specific quillback rockfish Annual Catch Targets (ACTs), Annual Catch Limit (ACL) contributions, Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) contributions, and Overfishing Limit (OFL) contributions North and South of 40°10' N. lat. within California. Values were developed and adopted through the 2023-24 SPEX process.

Area	2023 ACT (=ACL contribution) (mt)	ABC contribution (mt)	OFL contribution (mt)
North 40°10' N. lat	0.87	0.91	1.05
South 40°10' N. lat	0.89	0.93	1.06

Table 2. Best estimate of California quillback rockfish mortality (mt) in the recreational (CRFS estimates through May, ACVs through July 23) and commercial non-trawl landings (data retrieved from PacFIN July 24) fisheries, compared to the 2023 quillback rockfish ACT/ACT contributions north and south of 40°10' N. lat.

Area	Recreational Take (mt)	Commercial Landings (mt)	Total Take (mt)	2023 ACT (=ACL contribution) (mt)	% Attainment
North 40°10' N. lat	0.86	0.25	1.11	0.87	127.6%
South 40°10' N. lat	0.40	0.22	0.62	0.89	69.7%

Recreational Best Estimate of Catch by Harvest Specification Area

Table 3. Number of recreational quillback rockfish N 40°10' N. latitude encountered by Management Area and resulting Anticipated Catch Value (ACV) through July 23. As catch estimates become available, the ACV value is replaced with the estimate for that month (shown in ~~strikeout~~). Data are from CRFS, preliminary and subject to change.

Month	Northern MA	ACV (mt)	CRFS Estimate
January	0	0.00	0.00
February	0	0.00	0.00
March	0	0.00	0.00
April	0	0.00	0.00
May	16	0.08	0.06
June	74	0.36	
July	89	0.44	
Total	179	0.80	0.06
Best Data (CRFS Est. + ACV)		0.86	

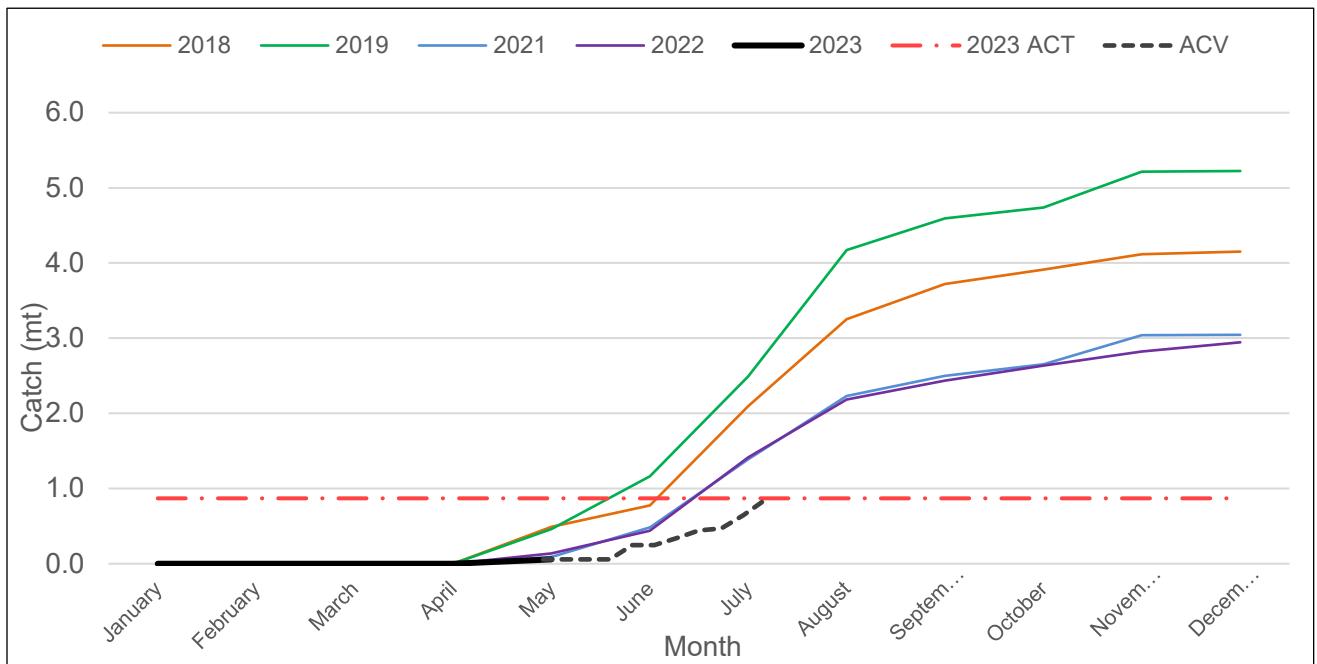


Figure 1. Recreational quillback rockfish N 40°10' N. latitude cumulative annual estimated mortality (mt) from 2018-2022 (2020 data not included – incomplete due to Covid-19), 2023 best estimate of catch, and 2023 harvest target. Catch estimate data from CFRS. Data for 2023 are through July 23. Data are preliminary and subject to change.

Table 4. Number of recreational quillback rockfish S 40°10' N. latitude encountered by Management Area and resulting ACV through July 23. As catch estimates become available, the ACV value is replaced with the estimate for that month (shown in ~~strikeout~~). Data are from CRFS, preliminary and subject to change.

Month	Southern MA	Central MA	SF MA	Mendocino MA	Total Sampled Fish	ACV (mt)	CRFS Estimate
January	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
February	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
March	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
April	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
May	0	4	4	1	9	0.11	0.03
June	0	13	7	0	20	0.24	
July	0	2	3	6	11	0.13	
Total	0	19	14	7	40	0.37	0.03
Best Data (CRFS Est. + ACV)						0.40	

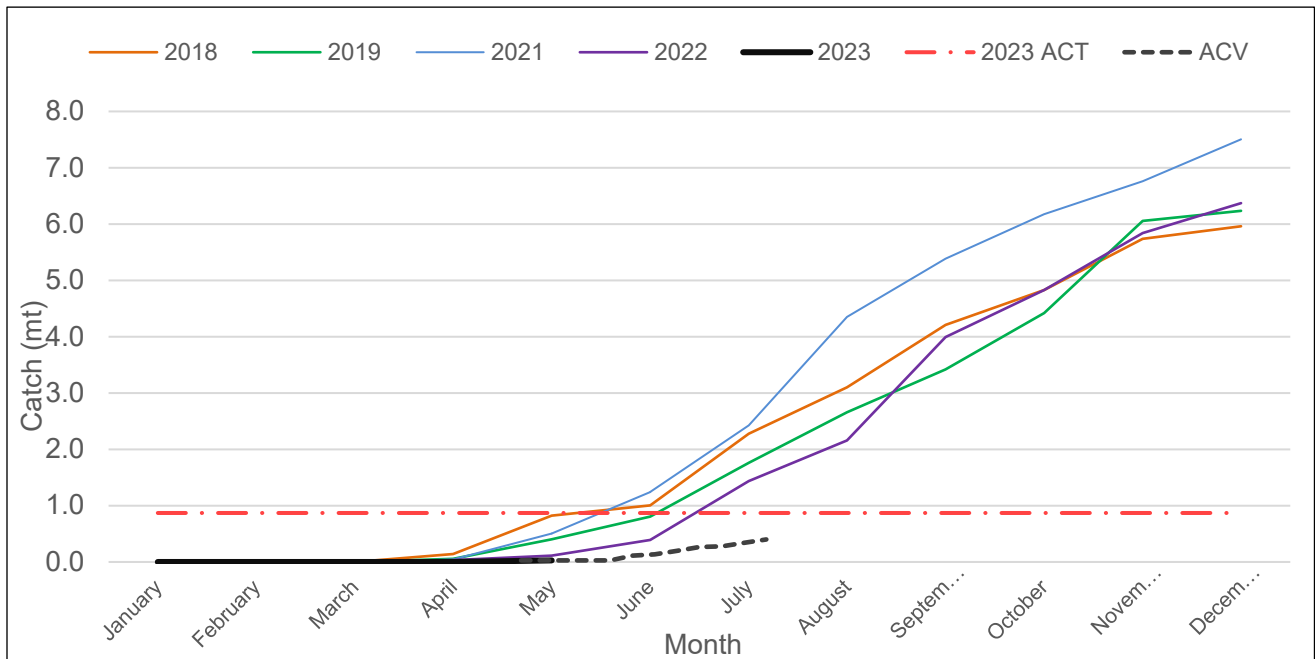


Figure 2. Recreational quillback rockfish S 40°10' N. latitude cumulative annual estimated mortality (mt) from 2018-2022 (2020 data not included – incomplete due to Covid-19), 2023 best estimate of catch, and 2023 harvest target. Catch estimate data from CFRS. Data for 2023 are through July 23. Data are preliminary and subject to change.

Recreational Sampled Fish by Area

Table 5. Proportion of sampled recreational quillback rockfish reported as kept or released by Management Area (MA)*, through July 23. Data are from CRFS/CDFW, are preliminary and subject to change.

* Southern Management Area omitted as no quillback were reported or observed

Proportion	Central MA	San Francisco MA	Mendocino MA	Northern MA
Kept	89.5%	57.1%	28.6%	48.6%
Released	10.5%	42.9%	71.4%	51.4%

Table 6. Proportion of sampled recreational quillback rockfish by Management Area for the area south of 40°10' N. lat through July 23. Seasons/depths for the San Francisco and Mendocino Management Areas were open May 15-July 15 only seaward of the 50 fm RCA line. Seasons/depths for the Central Management Area has been open at all depths since May 1.

Management Area	Proportion of Sampled Fish
Mendocino	17.5%
San Francisco	35.0%
Central	47.5%