

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT  
ON QUILLBACK ROCKFISH RESEARCH SET-ASIDE

The state of California, through the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), issues Scientific Collecting Permits (SCPs) for the purposes of research and education. Applicants are required to list the maximum number of each species being requested, their disposition (e.g., catch and release or sacrifice/permanent captivity), and the purpose of the scientific activity. Permittees are required to report the number of each species taken, as well as their disposition, yearly. CDFW is responsible for administering and tracking SCP activity, including anticipated mortality that may accrue. While for most groundfish species, SCP activities result in *de minimis* amounts of mortality, the expected restrictive overfishing limit and anticipated overfished status determination for the quillback rockfish stock off California require consideration of a formal research set-aside for federal and state research activities in the 2025-2026 biennium.

For quillback rockfish, CDFW plans to rescind or significantly reduce any authorizations for sacrifice or permanent captivity in 2025 and beyond, and will evaluate the need to reduce the number authorized for catch and release in each SCP that has already been issued for 2025 or 2026. If no amendments to currently-issued permits are made, CDFW anticipates annual state research mortality at 0.465 MT if all authorized take were to be realized. CDFW would likely deny any additional requested take of quillback rockfish in new research activities that seek to be permitted for 2025 and 2026. If all sacrifice were to be eliminated and catch and release reduced by 75 percent, CDFW calculates the maximum quillback rockfish mortality that would accrue in the currently issued SCPs would be 0.047 metric tons. This estimate was generated by multiplying the average estimated weight per quillback rockfish (0.98 kilograms) by the estimated number of quillback rockfish that would be authorized for catch and release.

Considering these bookend mortality estimates and plans for SCP amendments and issuance described above, **CDFW requests the GMT estimate state-authorized research activities to account for 0.1 MT of California quillback mortality annually, in the 2025-2026 biennium.** CDFW's Marine SCP project will work with current permittees on the revised authorizations, while considering key and priority research and data needs for quillback rockfish.

CDFW supports the GMT's efforts to determine and recommend the appropriate amount for a research set-aside for quillback rockfish in the 25-26 biennium. CDFW expects that in determining the set-aside, the estimated state research take will be added to NMFS' estimates of federal research take that may accrue in the west coast trawl survey or any other federal surveys in 2025 and 2026.