

CORDELL BANK CONSERVATION AREA REVISIONS

In March 2023, under Workload and New Management Measure Priorities, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prioritized scoping and consideration of the removing the Cordell Bank Groundfish Conservation Area (GCA) and other associated changes as described in [Agenda Item F.8.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, March 2023](#). The Cordell Bank GCA was implemented in the early 2000s to limit impacts to overfished rockfish and prohibits groundfish fishing within the boundaries of the GCA for trawl, non-trawl, and recreational fisheries (with some limited exceptions). During the 2023-2024 biennial process and Amendment 32 (non-trawl area management measures), it became apparent that this GCA was overlapping with several other restrictions including two essential fish habitat conservation areas (EFHCAs) and is resulting in regulatory confusion for stakeholders. Furthermore, the GCA is no longer needed due to the rebuilding of rockfish stocks. In September 2023, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) presented a proposal to remove the GCA for all groundfish fisheries while maintaining protections for sensitive habitats in the Cordell Bank (50- fm (91-m) isobath) bottom contact EFHCA. The Council recommended continued development of the CDFW proposal.

Attachment 1 provides a preliminary draft environmental assessment (EA), regulatory impact review (RIR), and Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) analysis, including a purpose and need, for the Council to consider. The Council should consider the materials, adopt a range of alternatives, and a preliminary preferred alternative if possible. Final action is tentatively scheduled for March 2025.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt purpose and need.**
- 2. Adopt a range of alternatives.**
- 3. Adopt a preliminary preferred alternative, if possible.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item I.5, Attachment 1: Preliminary Draft EA/RIR/MSA Analysis.
2. Agenda Item I.5.a, CDFW Report 1.
3. Agenda Item I.5.a, ONMS Report 1.
4. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

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| I.5 | Cordell Bank Conservation Area Revisions | Jessi Waller |
| a. | Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies | |
| b. | Public Comment | |
| c. | Council Action: Adopt Purpose and Need, Range of Alternatives, and Preliminary Preferred Alternative, if Possible | |