

CORDELL BANK CONSERVATION AREA REVISIONS - FINAL

In March 2023, under Workload and New Management Measure Priorities, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prioritized scoping and consideration of 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 adopted that proposal in a range of alternatives in November 2024 and selected it as its preliminary preferred alternative.

Attachment 1 provides a preliminary draft environmental assessment (EA), regulatory impact review (RIR), and Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) analysis for the Council to consider. Additionally, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provides a report on a proposed regulatory change to maintain the “100 fathom ring” around Cordell Bank to limit impacts from large footrope trawl gear. The Council should consider the materials and adopt a final preferred alternative.

Council Tasks:

- 1. Consider NMFS Report and recommendations.**
- 2. Adopt a final preferred alternative.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 1: Preliminary Draft EA/RIR/MSA Analysis (***Electronic Only***).
2. Agenda Item H.5.a, NMFS Report 1.
3. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

H.5 Cordell Bank Conservation Area Revisions

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- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- b. Public Comment
- c. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Preferred Alternative