

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON
PRELIMINARY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES FOR 2027-28 HARVEST
SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) provides the following recommendations for Council consideration as preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) management measures for the 2027-28 biennium.

Yelloweye rockfish and California Quillback rockfish Rebuilding Plans

CDFW supports the GMT ([Agenda Item D.10.a Supplemental GMT Report 1, March 2026](#)) assessment, with the rebuilt declaration for quillback rockfish off California recently finalized, and the rebuilt declaration for yelloweye rockfish anticipated within the next 6 months, these rebuilding plans are no longer needed. CDFW supports an amendment to remove the yelloweye rockfish and California quillback rockfish rebuilding plans from the FMP.

Area Management

Lasuen Knoll and Osborne Bank

For clarity and simplification of Federal regulations, CDFW supports Option 2 as the PPA to remove the 150 fm Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundary line around Lasuen Knoll, and revise the federal language regarding the exemption of these Non-Trawl RCA lines for these banks (e.g. “100 fm line–150 fm line also applies around islands and banks except for Lasuen Knoll and Osborne Bank”). This action removes the conflicting regulatory language which is confusing to stakeholders and creates enforcement challenges.

RCA Regulatory Text

The Federal non-trawl trip limit tables ([Table 2a \(North\) to Part 660, Subpart E, Title 50, Table 2a \(South\) to Part 660, Subpart E, Title 50, Table 3a \(North\) to Part 660, Subpart F, Title 50, Table 3a \(South\) to Part 660, Subpart F, Title 50](#)) state, “see appropriate state regulations for state closures,” however, California has designed its regulations such that area-based Federal regulations (including waypoints) are effective in state waters. Circular regulatory language is confusing to stakeholders and creates enforcement challenges. These changes would provide positive impacts to industry as it simplifies regulatory language. CDFW supports Option 2 as the preliminary preferred alternative but proposes substituting “enforce” with “implement” for clarity:

Revise the language in the Federal non-trawl trip limit tables to “*The Non-Trawl RCA is an area closed to fishing with particular non-trawl gear types, as defined at [§ 660.11](#). Non-Trawl RCA boundaries apply in the EEZ only; ~~see appropriate state regulations for state closures,~~ *however state regulations may implement RCA boundaries in state waters; see appropriate state regulations.* Non-Trawl RCA boundaries may be revised via inseason action; therefore, users should refer back to this table throughout the year.”*

Annual Catch Targets (ACTs)

CDFW supports, as PPA, the newly proposed recreational Annual Catch Targets (ACTs) that were analyzed for California quillback rockfish (Alternative 1 Option 2), lingcod south of 40° 10' N. lat. (Alternative 1 Option 2), and vermilion/sunset rockfish south of 40° 10' N. lat. (Alternative 1 Option 2). Currently none of these stocks have sector specific Harvest Guidelines (HGs) but each species/stock is predominately harvested by the recreational sector. Vermilion/sunset rockfish has been highly attained over several biennial cycles, whereas lingcod has historically had high spikes in recreational harvest, including in 2025. Quillback rockfish, while now rebuilt, has a low harvest limit with catches expected to be near full attainment. The all-depth season structure options being considered would be closely monitored inseason, with the potential for inseason management actions, including use of new recreational ACTs. These ACTs are intended to provide an additional measure of accountability, offering an ability to modify recreational management inseason based on current information. Additionally, CDFW supports continuation of the recreational ACT for copper rockfish south of 34° 17' N. lat. and the non-trawl ACT for shortspine thornyhead north of 34° 27' N. lat.

Trawl/Non-Trawl Allocations

Allocation for Slope Rockfish Complex South of 40° 10' N. lat.

To best meet the unique needs of the trawl and non-trawl sector, CDFW supports Option 4 as PPA as described in Section 7.4 of [Agenda Item C.7, Attachment 2, April 2026](#). The commercial non-trawl sector lands a greater proportion of blackgill rockfish, while the trawl sector relies more heavily on the other species within the slope rockfish complex. Although the GMT considered a simplification of the allocation (Options 2 & 3), Option 4 maintains the industry preferred allocation structure which allocates a greater percentage of blackgill rockfish to the non-trawl sector and “other slope rockfish” to trawl. Option 4 is preferred because it reflects the most recent fishery performance needs for both sectors over the status quo (Option 1).

California Recreational

Decoupling the Rockfish, Cabezon, and Greenling (RCG) Complex

CDFW supports decoupling the RCG complex as described in Section 16.2 of [Agenda Item C.7, Attachment 2, April 2026](#). This action would provide species specific regulations for cabezon and kelp greenling each with an individual bag limit and a 12-month all-depth boat-based season, and is not expected to result in significant increases in mortality for cabezon, kelp greenling, or rockfish.

Recreational Boat-Based Rockfish and Lingcod Season Structure

There is a significant level of modeling uncertainty in groundfish mortality projections for the management measures analyzed in the California recreational fishery, which are particularly pronounced for the 2027-28 analysis. Uncertainty increases in the model outputs when there is a substantial difference between the regulatory conditions affecting input data and the proposed new regulations, as is the case this cycle.

Multiple accountability measures exist to ensure mortality remains within harvest limits, including three new recreational ACTs described earlier in this report. Inseason tracking and monitoring protocols will continue in 2027-28, which include providing CDFW's inseason fishery performance reports to the Council several times per year. CDFW will also examine what additional tools might be useful to convey inseason catch and mortality information to industry and the public.

Ultimately, it is a Council risk call in terms of how restrictive the season structure and bag limits should be designed pre-season, knowing tools are available for use inseason in the event catches are tracking such they would exceed specifications or management measures. However, it is also important to consider the uncertainty in projected mortality and the likelihood these projections could be higher or lower by several tons, depending on any number of circumstances, including availability of these stocks or other target species like salmon or highly migratory species, weather conditions, and changes in effort in response to fuel costs or other economic considerations.

Within Agenda Item [C.7, Attachment 2, April 2026 section 16.2.4](#), several boat-based rockfish and lingcod season structure options are presented. Option 3 represents the status quo season structure, and Option 4 examines boat-based fishing for rockfish and lingcod from April 1 – December 31, at all depths, statewide. Following the March Council meeting, CDFW analyzed and discussed additional season structure options at the request of California recreational Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) representatives. Following those discussions, an additional season structure option has been developed for the Council to consider within the range of alternatives. Table 1 shows the GAP requested season structure and Table 2 shows the associated projected impacts to select groundfish species. For copper rockfish south of 34° 27' N. lat., the projected impacts in the GAP Option are lower than Option 4 (all depth statewide), but higher than Option 3 (status quo). For vermilion/sunset rockfish south of 40° 10' N. lat., the projected impacts are lower than both Options 3 and 4.

Additionally, CDFW provides updated projected impacts for Options 3 (Table 4) and Option 4 (Table 6). The projections below include full data from 2025 (although still preliminary), which were not previously available at the time of the initial Council Analytical Document deadline. The updated projections for Options 3 and 4 are similar for most species compared to the projections in Attachment 2, but differ for canary rockfish, lingcod, cowcod, and vermilion/sunset rockfish. With complete 2025 data, projected impacts to canary rockfish are higher across all the Options examined; for cowcod and vermilion/sunset rockfish, the impacts are lower across all Options. For lingcod, the updated projections are higher with respect to Option 3, but lower for Option 4.

Table 1. GAP requested California recreational season structure option for boat-based rockfish and lingcod. A less-than sign (<) indicates inshore of the RCA depth limit.

Management Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Northern	Closed			All depth								
Mendocino	Closed			All depth								
San Francisco	Closed			All depth								
Central	Closed			All depth								
Southern	Closed			All depth			<50 fathoms				All depth	

Table 2. GAP Requested season structure projected impacts to select groundfish stocks, without inseason adjustments, compared to the Council’s Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) harvest specifications. The projected impacts and limits assume CDFW’s preferred ACTs and bag limits, with *italics* indicating status quo bag limit. Both prohibition and a 1 fish bag in April for yelloweye rockfish are shown. All units in metric tons.

Species	Projected Mortality	Council PPA Harvest Specification		Limit Reference Point
		2027	2028	
Canary <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	78.3 – 90.1	53.9	55.9	CA Rec HG ^{a/}
Quillback <i>Prohibited</i>	5.7 – 6.3	7.1	7.1	Proposed Rec ACT
Lingcod S. 40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish bag</i>	365.8 – 404.3	387.1	391.3	Proposed Rec ACT
Vermilion/sunset 42°-40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	4.1 – 5	6.1	6.0	ACL Contribution to the Shelf Complex
Vermilion/sunset S. 40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	174.6 – 213.4	168.0	164.4	Proposed Rec ACT
Copper S. 34°27’ N. lat. <i>1-fish sub-bag</i>	21.5 – 22.9	20.1	22.0	Rec ACT
Cowcod 1-fish sub-bag (April only)	14.5 – 16.7	23.5	23.1	CA Rec HG ^{b/}
Yelloweye <i>Prohibited</i> 1-fish sub-bag (April only)	16.2 – 18.6 23.6 – 27.2	20.2	20.2	CA Rec HG ^{c/}

a/ The Council’s PPA is Alternative 2. The CA rec HG under Alternative 1 would be 50.5 mt in 2027 and 52.1 mt in 2028.

b/ The CA Rec HG is for the area South of 40°10’ N. lat. by stock definition. Projected impacts North of 40°10’ N. lat. are trace.

c/ The Council’s PPA is Alternative 2. The CA rec HG under Alternative 1 would be 25.7 mt in 2027 and 25.8 mt in 2028.

Table 3. Alternative 1, Option 3, status quo season structure, also provided as [Table 16-10 in Attachment 2](#). A less-than sign (<) indicates inshore of the RCA depth limit; greater-than (>) indicates offshore of the RCA depth limit.

Management Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Northern	Closed			All depth								
Mendocino	Closed			All depth								
San Francisco	Closed			All depth								
Central	Closed			All depth								
Southern	Closed			All depth			<50 fathoms		>50 fathoms*			

*During the offshore only fishery, only shelf and slope rockfish and lingcod may be retained. Nearshore rockfish are prohibited.

Table 4. Alternative 1, Option 3 ([Attachment 2](#)), status quo season structure projected impacts updated with full 2025 data to select groundfish stocks, without inseason adjustments, compared to the Council’s Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) harvest specifications. The projected impacts and limits assume CDFW’s preferred ACTs and bag limits, with *italics* indicating status quo bag limit. Both prohibition and a 1 fish bag in April for yelloweye rockfish are shown. All units in metric tons.

Species	Projected Mortality	Council PPA Harvest Specification		Limit Reference Point
		2027	2028	
Canary <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	78.2 – 90	53.9	55.9	CA Rec HG ^{a/}
Quillback <i>Prohibited</i>	5.7 – 6.3	7.1	7.1	Proposed Rec ACT
Lingcod S. 40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish bag</i>	361 – 399	387.1	391.3	Proposed Rec ACT
Vermilion/sunset 42°-40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	4.1 – 5	6.1	6.0	ACL Contribution to the Shelf Complex
Vermilion/sunset S. 40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	178.2 – 217.8	168.0	164.4	Proposed Rec ACT
Copper S. 34°27’ N. lat. <i>1-fish sub-bag</i>	14.2 – 15.1	20.1	22.0	Rec ACT
Cowcod 1-fish sub-bag (April only)	14.7 – 17	23.5	23.1	CA Rec HG ^{b/}
Yelloweye <i>Prohibited</i> 1-fish sub-bag (April only)	16.3 – 18.7 23.7 – 27.3	20.2	20.2	CA Rec HG ^{c/}

a/ The Council’s PPA is Alternative 2. The CA rec HG under Alternative 1 would be 50.5 mt in 2027 and 52.1 mt in 2028.

b/ The CA Rec HG is for the area South of 40°10’ N. lat. by stock definition. Projected impacts North of 40°10’ N. lat. are trace.

c/ The Council’s PPA is Alternative 2. The CA rec HG under Alternative 1 would be 25.7 mt in 2027 and 25.8 mt in 2028.

Table 5. Alternative 1, Option 4 California recreational season structure option for boat-based rockfish and lingcod, also provided as [Table 16-11 in Attachment 2](#).

Management Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Northern	Closed			All depth								
Mendocino	Closed			All depth								
San Francisco	Closed			All depth								
Central	Closed			All depth								
Southern	Closed			All depth								

Table 6. Alternative 1, Option 4 ([Attachment 2](#)) season structure projected impacts updated with full 2025 data to select groundfish stocks, without inseason adjustments, compared to the Council’s Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) harvest specifications. The projected impacts and limits assume CDFW’s preferred ACTs and bag limits, with *italics* indicating status quo bag limit. Both prohibition and a 1 fish bag in April for yelloweye rockfish are shown. All units in metric tons.

Species	Projected Mortality	Council PPA Harvest Specification		Limit Reference Point
		2027	2028	
Canary <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	78.4 – 90.2	53.9	55.9	CA Rec HG ^{a/}
Quillback <i>Prohibited</i>	5.7 – 6.3	7.1	7.1	Proposed Rec ACT
Lingcod S. 40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish bag</i>	375.3 – 414.8	387.1	391.3	Proposed Rec ACT
Vermilion/sunset 42°-40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	4.1 – 5	6.1	6.0	ACL Contribution to the Shelf Complex
Vermilion/sunset S. 40°10’ N. lat. <i>2-fish sub-bag</i>	198 – 242	168.0	164.4	Proposed Rec ACT
Copper S. 34°27’ N. lat. <i>1-fish sub-bag</i>	22.3 – 23.7	20.1	22.0	Rec ACT
Cowcod 1-fish sub-bag (April only)	16.7 – 19.2	23.5	23.1	CA Rec HG ^{b/}
Yelloweye <i>Prohibited</i> 1-fish sub-bag (April only)	16.3 – 18.7 23.7 – 27.3	20.2	20.2	CA Rec HG ^{c/}

a/ The Council’s PPA is Alternative 2. The CA rec HG under Alternative 1 would be 50.5 mt in 2027 and 52.1 mt in 2028.

b/ The CA Rec HG is for the area South of 40°10’ N. lat. by stock definition. Projected impacts North of 40°10’ N. lat. are trace.

c/ The Council’s PPA is Alternative 2. The CA rec HG under Alternative 1 would be 25.7 mt in 2027 and 25.8 mt in 2028.

CDFW would support season structure Option 3 as shown in Table 3 (status quo), Option 4 as shown in Table 5, or the GAP Option shown in Table 1 above, with CDFW's preferred ACTs and bag limits, as PPA for the California recreational boat-based rockfish and lingcod season.

Rockfish Sub-Bag Limits

Vermilion/Sunset Rockfish

Currently, there are different sub-bag limits for vermilion/sunset rockfish in California north and south of 40° 10' N. lat., which is 4 fish for the area north and 2 fish for the area south. In 2024, the vermilion/sunset rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat. ACL contribution to the minor shelf complex for the California portion of the area north was exceeded with the 4 fish sub-bag limit. With an all-depth season structure in this area, the likelihood of the mortality exceeding the harvest limit in this area increases. CDFW recognizes an opportunity to keep harvest within limits, address concerns from our Enforcement Consultants, and simplify regulations by making sub-bag limits consistent (2 fish) throughout the state for vermilion/sunset rockfish. CDFW analyzed lowering the sub-bag limit for the Northern Management Area from 4 fish to 2 fish. Under all of the season structure Options that CDFW supports, the projected impacts for vermilion/sunset rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat. with a 2 fish sub-bag limit ranges from 4.1 to 5 mt. The ACL contribution to the complex for the area between 42° and 40° 10' N. lat. is 6.1 mt in 2027 and 6.0 mt in 2028, which is shared between sectors.

To determine whether lowering the sub-bag limit would constrain the fishery, the RecFIN bag limit tool was used to analyze how many vermilion rockfish anglers typically keep in the Northern Management Area. On average from 2024-2025, 92 percent of anglers kept only 1 to 2 vermilion rockfish, whereas only 8 percent kept 3 or more. Therefore, we anticipate there would be few additional regulatory discards due to the change in sub-bag limit. Given these considerations, for the California recreational fishery, CDFW supports reducing the vermilion/sunset rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat. sub-bag limit from 4 fish to 2 fish as PPA.

Cowcod and Yelloweye Rockfish Seasonal Sub-Bag Limits

The Council is considering authorizing limited retention of cowcod and yelloweye rockfish in the California recreational fishery in 2027-28. [Attachment 2](#) shows California recreational impacts under season structure Options 3 and 4 with a 1 fish sub-bag limit in November *and* December (two months of retention allowed, all other months prohibited), or; 1 fish in November *or* December (one month of retention allowed, all other months prohibited). At the request of industry after the March Council meeting, CDFW analyzed a seasonal sub-bag limit of 1 fish in April for yelloweye rockfish and cowcod. Cowcod and yelloweye rockfish would remain prohibited during all other months. Moving the seasonal sub-bag limit to the beginning of the season could improve resource accessibility if depth limits, or sub-bag limits on other co-occurring species, were adjusted inseason.

The projected impacts of a 1 fish Cowcod sub-bag limit in April, with any of CDFW's supported season structures, ranges from 14.5 mt to 19.2 mt which is below the California recreational HG of 23.5 mt in 2027 and 23.1 mt in 2028. CDFW supports as PPA a statewide seasonal sub-bag limit of 1 cowcod in April for the California recreational fishery. While the seasonal sub-bag limit would apply statewide, the California recreational HG is only for the area south of 40° 10' N. lat. Cowcod encounters in northern ports are rare, so we expect mortality north of 40° 10' N. lat. would be trace.

For yelloweye rockfish, the projected impacts under any of CDFW's supported season structures with the seasonal April Option range from 23.6 mt to 27.3 mt. The California recreational HG under Alternative 1 harvest specifications is 25.7 mt in 2027 and 25.8 mt in 2028. Under Alternative 2, the California recreational HG would be 20.2 mt in both years. Therefore, this Option is expected to keep yelloweye rockfish mortality under Alternative 1 harvest specifications, but not under Alternative 2.