OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON 2027-28 BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE OREGON RECREATIONAL FISHERY

As the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) develops federal groundfish management measures for 2027-28, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) staff continue to seek public input on a preferred season structure (e.g., bag limits, area closures, gear restrictions) for the Oregon recreational groundfish seasons.

Harvest Guidelines

Under Alternative 2 for Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), the Oregon recreational harvest guidelines (HG) and presumed state quotas for 2027 and 2028 are presented in Table 1 (with 2026 values for comparison). Alternative 2 includes the more precautionary yelloweye rockfish ACL and slightly more liberal canary rockfish ACL. State quotas for some species and complexes are determined by taking the Oregon ACL or Oregon share of the ACL and apportioning it to the recreational and state-managed commercial nearshore fisheries via the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) process. The sharing has remained relatively unchanged since implementation in the early 2000s. There is a minor increase in the black/blue/deacon rockfish complex ACL due to the increasing black rockfish contribution to the ACL, which is projected to go up annually from the low level in 2025. The ACLs for the Oregon cabezon/kelp greenling complex, nearshore rockfish north of 40° 10’ N lat. complex, and canary rockfish are essentially the same as in 2026. With the most recent assessment estimating yelloweye rockfish to be rebuilt, the ACL is increasing under both Alternative 1 and Alternative 2. Even if the Council choses to be precautionary and set the ACL at a lower level (Alternative 2) than the maximum allowed (Alternative 1), the Oregon recreational HG will increase to 173% of the 2026 HG (Table 1).

The Alternative 1 ACLs and resulting Oregon recreational HGs for yelloweye and canary rockfishes do not change enough to account for different sub-bag limit options other than what was analyzed under Alternative 2. Therefore, the management approach would not change from the approach under Alternative 2.

Table 1. Oregon recreational Federal Harvest Guidelines (HGs), or state quotas, for 2027 and 2028 under Alternative 2 (in mt), with 2026 HGs for comparison.

Stock	2026 HG (mt)	2027 HG (percent of 2026)	2028 HG (percent of 2026)
Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish complex [a/]	329.5	344.2 (104%)	347.5 (105%)
Oregon cabezon/greenling complex [b/]	48.5	48.3 (99%)	48.1 (99%)
Nearshore rockfish complex north of 40° 10' N. lat. [c/]	14.3	13.9 (97%)	13.6 (95%)
Canary rockfish [d/]	28.6	30.1 (105%)	31.1 (109%)
Yelloweye rockfish [d/]	9.0	15.6 (173%)	15.6 (173%)

a/ The state process in Oregon establishes commercial and recreational quotas for black, blue, and deacon rockfishes. The values are the recreational share based on the 2026 recreational and commercial sharing percentages in Oregon state regulations.
b/ Includes kelp and other greenlings. Kelp greenling accounts for over 99 percent of the landings. The state process in Oregon establishes commercial and recreational shares for the Oregon cabezon/greenling complex. The values are the recreational share based on the 2026 recreational and commercial sharing percentages in Oregon state regulations.
c/ Blue and deacon rockfish are not part of the nearshore rockfish north complex in Oregon; they are part of a complex with black rockfish. The state process in Oregon establishes commercial and recreational quotas for nearshore rockfish complex species. The values are the recreational share based on the 2026 recreational and commercial sharing percentages in Oregon state regulations.
d/ Federal HGs are established for canary and yelloweye rockfish and should be included in Federal regulation.

Groundfish Seasons and Area Restrictions

Under Alternative 2 (and Alternative 1) for federal harvest specifications in 2027-28, regulations for the Oregon recreational groundfish fishery would continue to allow fishing at all depths year-round and maintain similar bag limits as in the last several years (Table 2), with possible adjustment to the canary rockfish sub-bag and allowing some retention of yelloweye rockfish, potentially seasonally. While conservative management of yelloweye rockfish may still be warranted, allowing limited retention will provide a source of fishery-dependent biological information, such as lengths and age structures, to inform a future full-benchmark assessment.

The sub-bag limit for canary rockfish will need to balance conservation objectives with trying to make the offshore long-leader gear fishery attractive enough to entice some anglers from the traditional nearshore groundfish fishery. With the one-fish sub-bag limit in 2026 some anglers stated concerns about catching and having to release a number of canary rockfish while attaining their bag limit of other species, causing some anglers to shy away from the offshore long-leader fishery. The low ACL contributions for black, blue, and deacon rockfishes and nearshore rockfish species have necessitated a low general marine species bag limit (3 fish for part of 2025) for 2025-2026. This is expected to continue into 2027 and 2028 based on recent years' groundfish effort. Groundfish effort off Oregon depends on many factors outside of groundfish regulations and model capabilities, such as opportunity in other fisheries (e.g., salmon and tuna), weather, ocean conditions, price of fuel, and general state of the economy.

Table 2. Oregon recreational groundfish season structure and bag limits proposed for federal rule under Alternative 2.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Groundfish Season	Open all depths											
Marine Bag Limit [a/]	Ten (10)											
--*Yelloweye Rockfish*	*Option 1 (Status Quo): No Retention*											
	Option 2: Sub-bag limit of one (1)											
Long-leader Bag Limit [b/]	Ten (10); Seaward of the 40-fathom regulatory line											
--*Canary Rockfish*	*Option 1 (Status Quo): Sub-bag limit of one (1)*											
	Option 2: Sub-bag limit of two (2)											
	Option 3: No sub-bag limit											
Lingcod Bag Limit	Three (3)											
Flatfish Bag Limit [c/]	Twenty-Five (25)											
Sablefish Bag Limit	Ten (10)											

a/ Marine bag limit includes all groundfish species other than lingcod, sablefish, flatfish, and Pacific halibut. Quillback rockfish are prohibited at all times.
b/ Long-leader fishery rockfish allowed for retention include blue, bocaccio, canary, chilipepper, deacon, greenstriped, redstripe, silvergray, widow, and yellowtail rockfishes.
c/ Flounders, soles, sanddabs, turbots, and halibuts except Pacific halibut.

Maintaining the federal regulations as shown in Table 2, even though the state often adopts more restrictive measures in state rules, enables ODFW to be more nimble with inseason management depending on the pace of the fishery and progress toward the HGs. The federal rules serve as a backstop, while state rules can be adjusted quickly in response to inseason circumstances, improving management responsiveness and the ability to achieve conservation and opportunity objectives. Some of the more restrictive state rules in recent years have included a seasonal depth restriction, a lower marine bag limit and lingcod bag limit, and sub-bag limits (or no retention) for canary and quillback rockfishes. For 2026, the Commission adopted the season structure shown in Table 3 in state rules.

Table 3. Oregon recreational groundfish season structure and bag limits in place via state regulations for 2026.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Groundfish Season	Open all depths											
Marine Bag Limit [a/]	Four (4)											
Long-leader Bag Limit [b/]	Ten (10); Seaward of the 40-fathom regulatory line											
--*Canary Rockfish*	*Sub-bag limit of two (2)*											
Lingcod Bag Limit	Three (3)											
Flatfish Bag Limit [c/]	Twenty-Five (25)											
Sablefish Bag Limit	Ten (10)											

a/ Marine bag limit includes all groundfish species other than lingcod, sablefish, flatfish, and Pacific halibut. Quillback and yelloweye rockfish are prohibited at all times.
b/ Long-leader fishery rockfish allowed for retention include blue, bocaccio, canary, chilipepper, deacon, greenstriped, redstripe, silvergray, widow, and yellowtail rockfishes.
c/ Flounders, soles, sanddabs, turbots, and halibuts except Pacific halibut.

Oregon prohibited the retention of quillback rockfish in the recreational fishery (and all non-trawl commercial fisheries) beginning January 1, 2022, based on the results of the 2021 assessment of the stock off Oregon. While the assessment indicated that the stock is healthy (47 percent of unfished spawning biomass, above the 40 percent target), the total biomass estimate was smaller than previously thought, and the available yield is lower than recent harvest levels. Oregon determined that lowering fishing mortality beginning in 2022 was in the best interest of the quillback rockfish stock and the fishery. ODFW anticipates continuing the prohibition in 2027-28. For state rules in 2027 and 2028, ODFW staff will continue to examine data from 2026 (along with other recent years) to model different season structures to keep harvest levels within state and federal harvest guidelines. The increase in the yelloweye rockfish HG may allow for some limited retention, which could provide a source of fishery dependent lengths and age structures. ODFW staff will present different season structure scenarios to the public prior to presenting a staff recommended season structure to the Commission during its annual consideration of groundfish rules each December.

Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Areas

As part of the biennial process, there has been discussion about removing the regulations for some rockfish conservation areas that exist in regulations but have never been implemented off Oregon. The Tillamook, Newport, and Florence yelloweye rockfish conservation areas (YRCAs) were just put into place in 2024, with the intent to re-evaluate during the next groundfish essential fish habitat process. Therefore, ODFW recommends retaining those YRCAs in regulation until that subsequent process.

The two Stonewall Bank YRCA expansions (Figure 1) were put in place when yelloweye rockfish was declared overfished in the early 2000s for both recreational groundfish and Pacific halibut fishing. They have not been implemented in either fishery since that time. With yelloweye rockfish anticipated to be declared rebuilt, these expansions are no longer necessary. Therefore,

ODFW recommends adopting the removal of the two Stonewall Bank YRCAs expansions from both groundfish and Pacific halibut regulations as the preliminary preferred alternative.

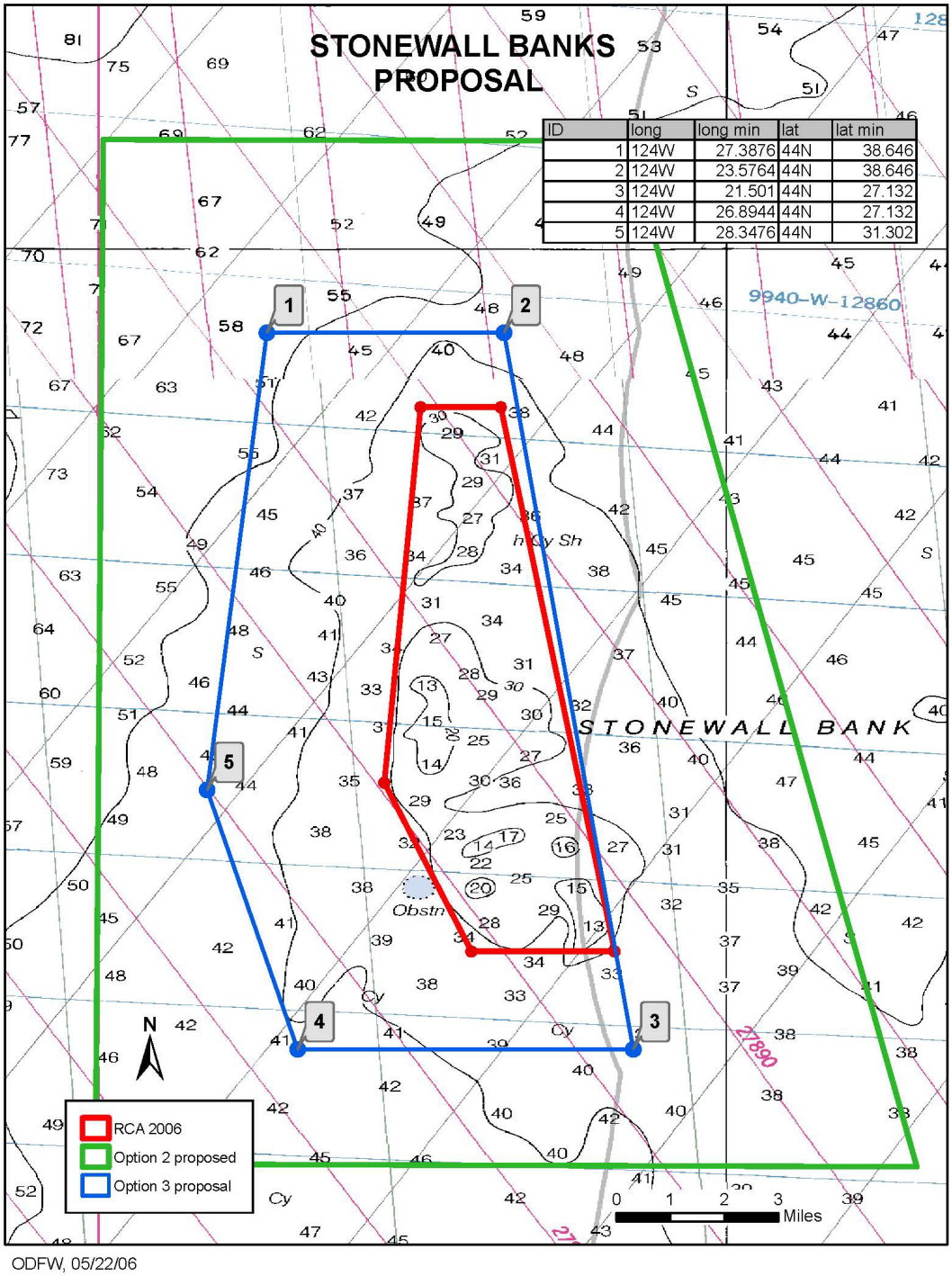

Figure 1. Map of the Stonewall Bank YRCA and expansions that were initially proposed in 2006 and subsequently put into federal regulation.