



Pacific Fishery Management Council *NEWS RELEASE*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 11, 2017

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ANOTHER IMPORTANT WEST COAST GROUNDFISH STOCK IS REBUILT

PORTLAND, OREGON – An important West Coast groundfish stock that was formerly overfished has now been rebuilt.

Pacific ocean perch, which is managed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS or NOAA Fisheries), has constrained the West Coast trawl fishery for decades. Pacific ocean perch has been overfished since the mid-1960s when foreign fleets targeted groundfish stocks, in particular Pacific ocean perch, off the U.S. West Coast. The mandates of the 1976 Magnuson-Stevens Act, the primary law governing U.S. fisheries management, eventually ended foreign fishing within 200 miles of the U.S. coast. The first Federal trip limits to discourage targeting and to conserve a U.S. West Coast groundfish stock were implemented for Pacific ocean perch in 1979 by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and NMFS. Rebuilding plans for Pacific ocean perch were adopted in 2000 and 2003..

Managing groundfish fisheries under rebuilding plans has been an immense challenge for the Pacific Council and the NMFS. These plans required sharp reductions in commercial and recreational fisheries targeting groundfish, and included widespread fishing closures through the establishment of Rockfish Conservation Areas off the West Coast and other measures.

“We are pleased to see that our management strategies have been successful in rebuilding this important groundfish stock, and want to acknowledge the industries’ cooperation and sacrifice in this effort,” said Council Chair Phil Anderson. “We also want to recognize NMFS for committing the resources to monitor and research groundfish stocks to improve the science used to sustainably manage these stocks.”

Since 2003, managing overfished species through area closures such as the Rockfish Conservation Areas has helped to reduce fishing impacts and rebuild overfished groundfish species. In addition, the groundfish fleet has had to limit fishing for other more abundant species to avoid unintentional catch of the overfished stocks. “It is remarkable that the rebuilding of Pacific ocean perch was accomplished 34 years ahead of schedule,” said Barry Thom, Regional Administrator of NMFS’ West Coast Region. “It is the strong partnership between fishery managers and industry and the strong commitment to catch limitations that allowed it to happen.”

These strategies have been used to successfully rebuild eight groundfish stocks, including Pacific whiting, bocaccio, darkblotched rockfish, lingcod, canary rockfish, widow rockfish, petrale sole, and Pacific ocean perch. Canary rockfish was declared rebuilt in 2015 and earlier this year, bocaccio and darkblotched rockfish were also declared rebuilt. These successes reflect the support and sacrifice of West Coast ports and fishermen who recognized the difficult actions and fishing cutbacks necessary to restore the stocks.

Only two overfished stocks—cowcod and yelloweye rockfish—continue to be managed under rebuilding plans. Both have shown dramatic rebuilding progress, with cowcod projected to be rebuilt by 2019 and yelloweye rockfish as soon as 2027. Improvements in the status of these two stocks, coupled with the successful rebuilding of the other eight groundfish stocks declared overfished in the past, will lead to increased fishing opportunities beginning in 2019. The Pacific Council is scheduled to make their final decisions on 2019 and 2020 groundfish fisheries next June at their meeting in Spokane, Washington.

Process

The Pacific ocean perch assessment was developed by NMFS scientists at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center and was reviewed in the Council's stock assessment review process with a final endorsement by the Council Scientific and Statistical Committee. On December 11, NMFS formally determined the stock's status as rebuilt.

Council Role

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 for the purpose of managing fisheries 3-200 nautical miles offshore of the United States of America coastline. Altogether, the Pacific Council manages more than 100 species of groundfish. The Pacific Council recommends management measures for groundfish and other ocean fisheries off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington.

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On the Web

- Pacific Fishery Management Council: <http://www.pcouncil.org>
- Pacific ocean perch stock assessment: http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/F4_Att1_Full_E-only_PacificOceanPerch2017_Assessment_NOV2017BB.pdf
- NOAA Fisheries article on rockfish rebuilding: <https://go.usa.gov/xNvCV>