



National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Region
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PUBLIC NOTICE

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PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY **RECREATIONAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES** **FOR MARCH THROUGH DECEMBER 2003**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces recreational management measures for March through December 2003 in the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery off Washington, Oregon, and California, **effective at 0001 hours (local time) March 1, 2003, until the 2004 annual specifications and management measures are effective.** These management measures were recommended by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council). The states of Washington, Oregon, and California will implement similar restrictions. Federal commercial regulations will be announced in a separate NMFS public notice (NMFS-SEA-03-05, February 28, 2003) available on the NMFS Northwest Region website at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/1press/sfdpress.htm> or by calling the contact names above. The commercial and recreational management measures may be changed throughout the year. Inseason changes will be announced in the *Federal Register*.

Changes from the corrected regulations for January-February 2003

- YRCA off Washington changed from an L-shaped to a C-shaped area
- California's recreational size limits for bocaccio north of 40°10' N. lat.
- California's recreational language for the RCG Complex south of 40°10' N. lat. to clarify that retention of bocaccio, canary rockfish, yelloweye rockfish, and cowcod are prohibited
- California's recreational hook and weight requirements for sanddabs south of 40°10' N. lat.

Time and Area Closures, including depth-based management

New in January 2003, the commercial and recreational groundfish fisheries are now managed using depth-based management measures, with large closed areas intended to prevent vessels from operating in waters where overfished species are commonly found. Recreational fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California north of 40°10' N. lat. will be subject to fewer depth restrictions than the commercial fisheries, primarily because most recreational vessels tend to operate in the nearshore area inside State waters. "Closure" when referring to closure of a fishery, means that taking and retaining, possessing, or landing that particular species or species group is prohibited. (See also 50 CFR 660.302) Offloading must begin before the time the fishery closes.

Visit the NMFS Northwest Region website for current groundfish management regulations and information.

<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/1sustfsh/gdfsh01.htm>

For 2003, the closed areas for the recreational fishery include:

- **the YRCA,**
Off Washington, recreational fishing for groundfish and halibut will be prohibited inside the Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA), a C-shaped closed area off the northern Washington coast (coordinates provided below in Washington's recreational fishery section).
- **the CCAs,**
The Cowcod Conservation Areas (CCAs) off southern California are areas closed to commercial and recreational groundfish fishing to protect cowcod, an overfished rockfish species. Recreational fishing for groundfish is prohibited within the CCAs, except that fishing for groundfish is permitted in waters inside 20 fathoms (37 m) as specified in the section below on California's recreational regulations south of 40°10' N. lat. Coordinates defining the CCAs have changed modestly to ensure that the CCAs comply with depth-based closures for waters off southern California. CCA coordinates are defined below and in Federal regulation at 50 CFR 660.304(c).
- **the 20-fm depth contour south of 40°10' N. lat. and**
As in past years, recreational fisheries off California, south of 40°10' N. lat., will be constrained by depth in order to reduce catch of bocaccio and other overfished rockfish species. Recreational fishing for groundfish will be prohibited entirely in waters offshore of the 20 fm (37 m) depth contour along the mainland coast and around offshore islands and rocks (excluding reefs and banks) south of 40°10' N. lat., except for sanddabs and California scorpionfish (see California's recreational regulations below). In California, this closed area south of 40°10' N. lat. is referred to as the California Rockfish Conservation Area or CRCA. Several of the restrictions within the CRCA affect only State-managed species and will be implemented through State regulations.
- **if necessary, the area offshore of the 27-fm depth contour off Oregon and Northern California (north of 40°10' N. lat.) may be closed inseason.**
Off Oregon and California, north of 40°10' N. lat., recreational fishing for groundfish may be closed outside of 27 fm (49 m) if either the yelloweye or canary rockfish recreational fisheries set asides are projected to be achieved. In the recreational fishery, only the 27-fm line used for inseason management of the recreational fishery off Oregon and Northern California (north of 40°10' N. lat.), is generally described using a fathom contour line approximated by connecting straight lines between a series of coordinates. Coordinates for the 27-fm line affecting the recreational sector are available on the NMFS Northwest Region website (<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/1press/sfdpress.htm>) in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and will be announced in a future public notice, should they become effective.

Washington Recreational Regulations

For each person engaged in recreational fishing off Washington, the groundfish bag limit is 15 groundfish, including rockfish and lingcod, and is open year-round (except for lingcod). The following sub-limits and closed areas apply:

Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA) -

Recreational fishing for groundfish is prohibited within the YRCA. It is unlawful for recreational

fishing vessels to take, retain, possess, or land groundfish inside the YRCA. The YRCA is a C-shaped area off the northern Washington coast that is bound by straight lines connecting all of the following points in the order listed:

48°18' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.;
48°18' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°11' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°11' N. lat.; 125°11' W. long.;
48°04' N. lat.; 125°11' W. long.;
48°04' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°00' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°00' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.;
and connecting back to 48°18' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.

Rockfish - In areas off Washington that are open to recreational groundfish fishing, there is a 10-rockfish per day bag limit, of which no more than 1 may be canary rockfish. Taking and retaining yelloweye rockfish is prohibited.

Lingcod - Recreational fishing for lingcod is closed between January 1 and March 15, and between October 16 and December 31. In areas seaward of Washington that are open to recreational groundfish fishing and when the recreational season for lingcod is open (i.e., between March 16-October 15), there is a bag limit of 2 lingcod per day, which may be no smaller than 24 in (61 cm) total length.

Oregon Recreational Regulations

The bag limits for each person engaged in recreational fishing off Oregon are 2 lingcod per day, which may be no smaller than 24 inches total length, and 10 marine fish per day, which excludes salmon, tuna, surfperch, sanddab, lingcod, and baitfish, but which includes rockfish and other groundfish. The minimum size limit for cabezon retained in the recreational fishery is 15 inches. Within the 10 marine fish bag limit, no more than 1 may be canary rockfish, no more than 1 may be yelloweye rockfish and when the all-depth recreational fisheries for Pacific halibut are open, the first Pacific halibut taken of 32 inches or greater in length may be retained. During the all-depth recreational fisheries for Pacific halibut, vessels with halibut on board may not take, retain, possess or land yelloweye rockfish or canary rockfish.

California Recreational Regulations

Off California (north and south of 40°10' N. lat.), in times and areas when the recreational fishery is open, there is a 20-fish bag limit for all species of finfish, within which no more than 10 fish of any one species may be taken or possessed by any one person. Retention of cowcod is prohibited in California's recreational fishery all year in all areas.

California North of 40°10' N. lat.

For each person engaged in recreational fishing off California north of 40°10' N. lat., the following seasons, bag limits, and size limits apply:

***RCG Complex* -**

The California rockfish, cabezon, greenling complex (RCG Complex), as defined in state regulation (Section 1.91, Title 14, California Code of Regulations), includes all rockfish, kelp greenling, rock

greenling, and cabezon. This category does not include California scorpionfish (sculpin).

Seasons. North of 40°10' N. lat., recreational fishing for the RCG Complex is open from January 1 through December 31.

Bag limits, boat limits, hook limits. North of 40°10' N. lat., the bag limit is 10 rockfish per day, of which no more than 2 may be bocaccio, 1 may be canary rockfish, and no more than 1 per day up to a maximum of 2 per boat may be yelloweye rockfish. The following daily bag limits also apply: no more than 10 cabezon per day and no more than 10 greenling (kelp and/or rock greenling) per day. Multi-day limits are authorized by a valid permit issued by California and must not exceed the daily limit multiplied by the number of days in the fishing trip.

Size limits. The following size limits apply: bocaccio may be no smaller than 10 inches total length; cabezon may be no smaller than 15 inches total length; and kelp and rock greenling may be no smaller than 12 inches total length.

Dressing/filleting. Cabezon, kelp greenling, and rock greenling taken in the recreational fishery may not be filleted at sea. Rockfish skin may not be removed when filleting or otherwise dressing rockfish taken in the recreational fishery. The following rockfish fillet size limits apply: bocaccio fillets may be no smaller than 5 inches and brown-skinned rockfish fillets may be no smaller than 6.5 inches. "Brown-skinned" rockfish include the following species: brown, calico, copper, gopher, kelp, olive, speckled, squarespot, and yellowtail.

Lingcod -

Seasons. North of 40°10' N. lat., recreational fishing for lingcod is open from January 1 through December 31.

Bag limits, boat limits, hook limits. North of 40°10' N. lat., the bag limit is 2 lingcod per day. Multi-day limits are authorized only with valid permit issued by California and must not exceed the daily limit multiplied by the number of days in the fishing trip.

Size limits. Lingcod may be no smaller than 24 inches total length.

Dressing/fileting. Lingcod fillets may be no smaller than 16 inches in length .

California South of 40°10' N. lat.

For each person engaged in recreational fishing seaward of California south of 40°10' N. lat., the following seasons, bag limits, size limits and closed areas apply:

Closed Areas -

Cowcod Conservation Areas (CCAs). Coordinates defining the CCAs have changed modestly in 2003 to ensure that the CCAs comply with depth-based closures for waters off southern California. Recreational fishing for groundfish is prohibited within the CCAs (coordinates provided below), except that fishing for sanddabs is permitted subject to the provisions in the paragraph on sanddabs below and that fishing for species managed under this section (not including cowcod, bocaccio, canary, and yelloweye rockfishes) is permitted in waters shoreward of the 20-fm depth contour within the CCAs from July 1 through December 31, 2003, subject to the bag limits in this section.

CCA Coordinates -

(1) The Western CCA is an area south of Point Conception that is bound by straight lines connecting all of the following points in the order listed:

33°50' N. lat., 119°30' W. long.;
33°50' N. lat., 118°50' W. long.;
32°20' N. lat., 118°50' W. long.;
32°20' N. lat., 119°37' W. long.;
33°00' N. lat., 119°37' W. long.;
33°00' N. lat., 119°53' W. long.;
33°33' N. lat., 119°53' W. long.;
33°33' N. lat., 119°30' W. long.; and
back to 33°50' N. lat., 119°30' W. long.

(2) The Eastern CCA is a smaller area west of San Diego that is bound by straight lines connecting all of the following points in the order listed:

32°42' N. lat., 118°02' W. long.;
32°42' N. lat., 117°50' W. long.;
32°36'42" N. lat., 117°50' W. long.;
32°30' N. lat., 117°53'30" W. long.;
32°30' N. lat., 118°02' W. long.; and
back to 32°42' N. lat., 118°02' W. long.

Depth-based Closure. South of 40°10' N. lat., recreational fishing for all groundfish, including lingcod, is prohibited seaward of the 20-fm depth contour, except that recreational fishing for sanddabs is permitted seaward of the 20-fm depth contour subject to the provisions in the paragraph on sanddabs below.

RCG Complex-

The California rockfish, cabezon, greenling complex (RCG Complex), as defined in state regulations (Section 1.91, Title 14, California Code of Regulations), includes all rockfish, kelp greenling, rock greenling, and cabezon. This category does not include California scorpionfish (sculpin).

Seasons. South of 40°10' N. lat., recreational fishing for the RCG Complex is open from July 1 through December 31 (closed from January 1 through June 30). When recreational fishing for the RCG Complex is open, it is permitted only inside the 20-fm depth contour.

Bag limits, boat limits, hook limits. South of 40°10' N. lat., in times and areas when the recreational season for the RCG Complex is open, there is a limit of 2-hooks and one line when fishing for rockfish, and the bag limit is 10 RCG Complex fish per day (not including bocaccio, canary rockfish, yelloweye rockfish and cowcod, which are prohibited), of which up to 10 may be rockfish, no more than 2 of which may be shallow nearshore rockfish. [Note: The shallow nearshore rockfish group off California are composed of kelp, grass, black-and-yellow, China, and gopher rockfishes.] Also within the 10 RCG Complex fish per day limit, no more than 2 groundfish per day may be greenling (kelp and/or rock greenling) and no more than 3 groundfish per day may be cabezon. Lingcod, California scorpionfish, and sanddabs taken in recreational fisheries off California do not count toward the 10 RCG Complex fish per day bag limit. Multi-day limits are authorized by a valid permit issued by California and must not exceed the daily limit multiplied by the number of days in the fishing trip.

Size limits. The following size limits apply: cabezon may be no smaller than 15 inches and kelp and rock greenling may be no smaller than 12 inches.

Dressing/filleting. Cabezon, kelp greenling, and rock greenling taken in the recreational fishery may not be filleted at sea. Rockfish skin may not be removed when filleting or otherwise dressing rockfish taken in the recreational fishery. "Brown-skinned" rockfish include the following species: brown, calico, copper, gopher, kelp, olive, speckled, squarespot, and yellowtail. "Brown-skinned" rockfish fillets may be no smaller than 6.5 inches.

California scorpionfish - California scorpionfish only occur south of 40°10' N. lat.

Seasons. South of 40°10' N. lat., recreational fishing for California scorpionfish is closed from March 1 through June 30 (i.e., the California scorpionfish season is open during January-February and during July-December). When recreational fishing for California scorpionfish is open, it is permitted only inside the 20-fm depth contour (except at Huntington Flats between a line drawn due south from Point Fermin (33/42'30" N. lat.; 118/17'30" W. long.) and a line drawn due west from the Newport South Jetty (33/35'37" N. lat.; 117/52'50" W. long.,) recreational fishing for California scorpionfish may occur from shore to a boundary line approximating 50-fm during July-August).

Bag limits, boat limits, hook limits. South of 40°10' N. lat., in times and areas where the recreational season for California scorpionfish is open, and the bag limit is 5 California scorpionfish per day. California scorpionfish do not count against the 10 RCG Complex fish per day limit. Multi-day limits are authorized by a valid permit issued by California and must not exceed the daily limit multiplied by the number of days in the fishing trip.

Size limits. California scorpionfish may be no smaller than 10 inches total length.

Dressing/filleting. California scorpionfish fillets may be no smaller than 5 inches.

Lingcod -

Seasons. South of 40°10' N. lat., recreational fishing for lingcod is open July 1 through December 31. When recreational fishing for lingcod is open in the south, it is permitted only inside the 20-fm depth contour.

Bag limits, boat limits, hook limits. South of 40°10' N. lat., in times and areas when the recreational season for lingcod is open, there is a limit of 2-hooks and one line when fishing for lingcod, and the bag limit is 2 lingcod per day. Lingcod do not count against the 10 RCG Complex fish per day limit. Multi-day limits are authorized by a valid permit issued by California and must not exceed the daily limit multiplied by the number of days in the fishing trip.

Size limits. Lingcod may be no smaller than 24 inches total length.

Dressing/Filleting. Lingcod fillets may be no smaller than 16 inches in length.

Sanddabs -

South of 40°10' N. lat., recreational fishing for sanddabs is permitted both shoreward and seaward of the 20-fm (37-m) depth contour (i.e., recreational fishing for sanddabs is permitted in all areas south of 40°10' N. lat.). Recreational fishing for sanddabs is permitted seaward of the 20-fm depth contour subject to a limit of up to 12-hooks "Number 2" or smaller, which measure 11 mm point to shank, and up to 2 lb of weight per line. There is no bag limit, season, or size limit for sanddabs, however, it is prohibited to fillet sanddabs at sea.

For more information contact: NMFS Northwest Region at 206-526-6140 or visit our website at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>, click on "Pacific Coast Groundfish;" NMFS Southwest Region at 562-980-4000; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at 360-249-4628; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at 541-867-4741; or the California Department of Fish and Game at 707-441-5797 (Eureka), 510-581-7358 (Belmont), 562-342-7184 (Los Alamitos), 858-546-7167 (La Jolla).

This Public Notice serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide for the final rule implementing the 2003 Pacific Coast groundfish fishery specifications and management measures. Any discrepancies between this public notice and the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

To receive Pacific Coast Groundfish public notices via e-mail, please e-mail your request to westcoastgroundfish@noaa.gov