



2024 SOUTHERN Management Area Recreational Groundfish Regulations Summary^{1, 2, 3} (Excluding **Groundfish Exclusion Areas**)

Ocean waters between **34°27' N. latitude (Point Conception)** and the U.S. – Mexico Border (§27.45(a))

These regulations are subject to in-season change. It is the reader's responsibility to know and abide by all regulations in effect at the time of fishing activity. Check for [current regulations](#) prior to fishing.

(Shore-based anglers and spear divers are exempt from seasons and depths. See footnote 2.)

Certain areas within the management area may further prohibit or restrict fishing (e.g., [marine protected areas](#)).

GROUNDFISH EXCLUSION AREAS REPLACING COWCOD CONSERVATION AREAS: As of January 1, 2024

Cowcod Conservation Areas have been repealed and **8 Groundfish Exclusion Areas** (GEAs) have been established, where species authorizations, prohibitions, depth constraints and seasons differ from those of the Southern Groundfish Management Area ([§ 660.70](#)).

DESCENDING DEVICES REQUIRED⁴: No Person shall take or possess any federal groundfish from any boat or other floating device in ocean waters without a descending device in possession.

THESE ROCKFISHES MAY NOT BE TAKEN OR POSSESSED IN CALIFORNIA:

Bronzespotted Rockfish, Cowcod, [Quillback Rockfish](#), and [Yelloweye Rockfish](#) (§28.55)

FISHING IS CLOSED year-round, at all depths NO RETENTION at any time (zero fish per person)

Species Group	NEARSHORE ROCKFISH, CABEZON and GREENLING Nearshore Rockfish: (§1.91(a)(1) black, black and yellow, blue, brown, calico, China, copper, gopher, grass, kelp, and olive rockfishes; treefish Cabezon and Greenlings (§28.28 and §28.29)	SHELF and SLOPE ROCKFISH and LINGCOD Shelf Rockfish, (§1.91(a)(3)) bocaccio; canary, chilipepper, dusky, flag, greenblotched, greenspotted, greenstriped, harlequin, honeycomb, Mexican, pink, redstripe, rosethorn, rosy, shortbelly, silvergray, speckled, squarespot, starry, stripetail, tiger, vermilion, widow, and yellowtail rockfishes Slope Rockfish, (§1.91(a)(4)) aurora, bank, blackgill, darkblotched, redbanded, roughey, sharpchin, shortraker, splitnose, and yellowmouth rockfishes; Pacific ocean perch Lingcod (§28.27)
Jan - Mar	Jan 1 – Mar 31: Closed - unlawful to possess in all waters	Jan 1 – Mar 31: Closed - unlawful to possess in all waters
April - June	April 1 – June 30: Open All Depth	April 1 – June 30: Open All Depth
July – Sep	July 1 – Sep 30: 50 Fathom - Inshore Only Take is prohibited seaward of the 50 fathom (300 feet) Rockfish Conservation Area boundary line, which is a series of connected waypoints defined in Federal regulations (50 CFR Part 660, Subpart C)	July 1 – Sep 30: 50 Fathom - Inshore Only Take is prohibited seaward of the 50 fathom (300 feet) Rockfish Conservation Area boundary line, which is a series of connected waypoints defined in Federal regulations (50 CFR Part 660, Subpart C)
Oct - Dec	Oct 1 – Dec 31: Closed - unlawful to possess in all waters	Oct 1 – Dec 31: 50 Fathom - Offshore Only Take is prohibited shoreward of the 50 fathom (300 feet) Rockfish Conservation Area boundary line, which is a series of connected waypoints defined in Federal regulations (50 CFR Part 660, Subpart C)

2024 Daily Bag Limit and Minimum Size Limit for All Anglers and Divers

Species	Daily Bag Limit	Min. Size Limit ⁵	Filleting Aboard a Vessel ⁶
RCG Complex includes all species of Rockfishes, Cabezon and Greenlings (\$1.91 (a)(1), 1.91(a)(3), 1.91(a)(4), 28.55, 28.28, and 28.29).	10 fish in combination per person EXCEPT: <u>Copper rockfish:</u> 1 fish per person <u>Vermilion rockfish:</u> 2 fish per person	See individual species and groups below: Cabezon: 15" total length Kelp and/or rock greenlings: 12" total length	All Rockfish: No minimum length. Fillets must have entire skin attached Cabezon and Greenlings: Not Allowed
Lingcod (\$28.27)	2 fish per person	22" total length	Minimum 14" in length with a 1" square patch of skin on each fillet

Recreational Regulations for other groundfish species can be found on the CDFW
[Sportfishing Regulations website](#)

- Certain areas may prohibit or restrict fishing, including State and federal Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) or other State and federal conservation areas. Check CDFW's website at wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs for MPAs, or the [Ocean Sportfishing Interactive Web Map](#) for MPAs and other closures.
- Divers and shore-based anglers are exempt from season and depth restrictions affecting the RCG complex and other federally managed groundfish (sections 27.20(b)(1)(C) and 27.20(b)(1)(D)). Shore-based anglers are fishermen that fish from beaches, banks, piers, jetties, breakwaters, docks, and other manmade structures connected to the shore. Divers are spear fishermen entering the water either from the shore or from a boat or other floating object. The possession and transit provisions described for shore-based anglers, and divers are as follows:
 - When angling from shore (includes beaches, banks, piers, jetties, breakwaters, docks, and other man-made structures connected to the shore), all species may be taken and/or possessed year-round (See subsection 27.50(b)(1) for exceptions in the Cowcod Conservation Areas). No vessel or watercraft (motorized or non-motorized) may be used to assist in the take, transport and/or possession of these species under this provision.
 - When diving or spearfishing, as authorized in Section 28.90, all species may be taken and/or possessed year-round (See subsection 27.50(b)(2) for exceptions in the Cowcod Conservation Areas). When boat-based groundfish fishing is closed, all types of fishing gear, except spearfishing gear, are prohibited to be aboard the vessel or watercraft (motorized or non-motorized) when taking and/or possessing these species under this provision.
- TRANSIT PROVISION: In waters where groundfish species or species groups are closed to take or possession but authorized for take or possession in other areas, those species or species groups may be possessed aboard a vessel that is anchored, drifting, or transiting in or through that closed area. While anchored, drifting, or transiting through an area closed to take or possession of these groundfish species or species groups, no gear may be deployed other than for the take of crustaceans with hoop nets used pursuant to subsection 29.80(b), Dungeness crab traps used pursuant to subsection 29.80(c), and dip nets used pursuant to Section 28.80. (§29.80(b), §29.80(c), §28.80).
- No person shall take or possess any federal groundfish as defined in Section 1.91 and all greenlings of the genus *Hexagrammos* from any boat or other floating device in ocean waters without having a descending device in possession and available for immediate use to assist in releasing rockfish to the depth of capture (§27.20(b)(1)(D)(2)).
- Total length is the longest straight-line measurement from the tip of the head with the mouth closed to the end of the longest lobe of the tail (Section 1.62). A measurement method illustration is available in the current Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations booklet, available on the CDFW website.
- For the purpose of these regulations, the definition of fillet is the flesh from one side of a fish extending from the head to the tail which has been removed from the body (head, tail, and backbone) in a single continuous piece (Section 27.65(a)). No person shall fillet on any boat or bring ashore as fillets any fish except in accordance with requirements established in Section 27.65(b)). See regulations for information on gear restrictions (Sections 28.65, 28.70, 28.90, 28.91, and 28.95) and species-specific fillet regulations (Section 27.65).