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VIII. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action:

(a) Alternatives to Regulatory Action:

No alternatives were identified by, or brought to the attention of Commission staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative:

Under the No Change Alternative, state law would be inconsistent with federal law. Inconsistency in regulations will create confusion among the public and may result in laws that are difficult to enforce. Additional opportunity expected to come with the federal regulation changes effective in January 2019 would not be realized.

It is critical to have consistent state and federal regulations establishing harvest limits, season dates, depth constraints and other management measures, and also critical that the state and federal regulations be effective concurrently. Consistency with federal regulations is also necessary to maintain state authority over its recreational and nearshore commercial groundfish fishery and avoid federal preemption under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act [16 USC §1856 (b)(1)].

(c) Consideration of Alternatives:

In view of information currently possessed, no reasonable alternative considered would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the regulation is proposed, would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the adopted regulation, or would be more cost effective to affected private persons and equally effective in implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law.

IX. Impact of Regulatory Action:

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

(a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States:

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The

Commission anticipates increased opportunities for the recreational and commercial groundfish fishery in 2019-2020 compared to 2018.

- (b) Impact on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment:

The Commission does not anticipate any significant impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs, the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses or the expansion of businesses in California.

The Commission anticipates benefits to the health and welfare of California residents. Participation in sport fisheries opportunities fosters conservation through education and appreciation of California's wildlife.

The Commission does not anticipate any benefits to worker safety.

The Commission anticipates benefits to the environment by the sustainable management of California's sport and commercial fishing resources.

- (c) Cost Impacts on a Representative Private Person or Business:

The agency is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action.

- (d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Cost/Savings in Federal Funding to the State:

None.

- (e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies:

None.

- (f) Programs Mandated to Local Agencies or School Districts:

None.

- (g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be Reimbursed Under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4, Government Code:

None.

(h) Effect on Housing Costs:

None.

## Updated Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Biennially, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) reviews the status of west coast groundfish populations. As part of that process, it recommends groundfish fisheries harvest limits and regulations aimed at meeting biological and fishery allocation goals specified in law, or established in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FGFMP).

These recommendations coordinate west coast management of recreational and commercial groundfish fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (three to 200 miles offshore) off Washington, Oregon and California. These recommendations are subsequently implemented as federal fishing regulations by National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries.

Regulatory authority for most nearshore stocks is shared jointly between state and federal governments. For consistency, the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) routinely adopts regulations to bring state law into conformance with federal law for groundfish and other federally-managed species. Nearshore stocks are managed based on both PFMC-established federal annual catch limits (ACL), and Commission-established total allowable catch (TAC) values. ACLs and TACs serve the same purpose of setting a limit on catch.

Current regulations establish recreational season lengths, depth constraints, methods of take, and size, bag and possession limits within the five groundfish management areas for all federal groundfish and associated species.

Current state regulations also provide for a statewide TAC for cabezon and greenlings of the genus *Hexagrammos*, along with allocation of these TACs between the recreational and commercial fishery sectors, and commercial trip limits for cabezon and greenling. Until recently, TACs specified in Title 14 have been lower than the ACLs established in federal regulations. Starting in 2019, the federal ACL for cabezon will be lower than the state TAC.

Modest increases to trip limits can be accommodated under federal ACLs since commercial cabezon and greenling landings have fallen below ACLs in recent years.

### **Summary of Proposed Amendments**

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is proposing the following regulatory changes to be consistent with PFMC recommendations for federal groundfish regulations in 2019 and 2020. This approach will allow the Commission to adopt State recreational groundfish regulations to timely conform to those taking effect in federal ocean waters in January 2019.

The proposed regulatory changes will implement the following changes:

1. Increase the allowable depth for the recreational groundfish fishery in the Southern Management Area and Cowcod Conservation Area;
2. Increase the recreational season length for groundfish in the San Francisco Management Area;

3. Increase the recreational season length for California scorpionfish in the Mendocino, San Francisco, Central and Southern Management Areas;
4. Increase the recreational bag limit for canary rockfish from one to two fish statewide;
5. Decrease the recreational bag limit for lingcod from two to one fish in Mendocino, San Francisco, Central, and Southern Management Areas;
6. Replace language referencing numerical values for cabezon and greenling TACs with references to ACLs in federal regulation;
7. Eliminate language referencing allocation limits for cabezon and greenling from Section 52.10; and
8. Increase commercial trip limits for cabezon and greenling.

The benefits of the proposed regulations are consistency with federal law, sustainable management of groundfish resources, and promotion of businesses that rely on recreational and commercial groundfish fishing.

The proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing State regulations. The Legislature has delegated authority to the Commission to adopt fishing regulations (Fish and Game Code, sections 200, 205 and 265). The proposed regulations are consistent with regulations for fishing in marine protected areas (Section 632, Title 14, CCR), with Nearshore Fishery Management Plan regulations (Sections 52.00 through 52.10, Title 14, CCR) and with general fishing regulations in Chapters 1 and 4 of Subdivision 1 of Division 1, Title 14, CCR. Commission staff has searched the California Code of Regulations and has found no other State regulations related to the take of groundfish.

#### Update to Authority and Reference Citations Based on Recent Legislation

Senate Bill 1473 (Stats. 2016, Ch. 546) made organizational changes to the Fish and Game Code that became effective January 1, 2017. The changes included moving the Commission's exemptions from specified Administrative Procedure Act time frames from Section 202 to Section 265 of the Fish and Game Code, and moving the Commission's effective period procedures from Section 220 to Section 275 of the Fish and Game Code. In accordance with these changes to the Fish and Game Code, sections 202 and 220 are removed from, and sections 265 and 275 are added to the authority and reference citations for this rulemaking.

#### **Update:**

**At its December 12, 2018 meeting in Oceanside, CA, the Commission adopted the regulatory amendments as described in the Notice of Proposed Action. There have been no changes in applicable laws, or to the effect of the proposed regulations from the laws and effects described in the Notice of Proposed Action. Minor grammatical changes were made to section 27.50 to maintain consistency of regulatory language.**