



2023 COWCOD Conservation Area Recreational Groundfish Regulations Summary^{1, 2}

(Including Tanner and Cortez Banks, See §27.50 for exact location coordinates)

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.

Bold Red Text shows regulations that have changed for 2023.

- The **Cowcod Conservation Areas** are special closure areas within the Southern Groundfish Management Area, where species authorizations, prohibitions, depth constraints and seasons differ from those of the Southern Groundfish Management Area (§27.50).
- Certain areas within the management area may further prohibit or restrict fishing (e.g. [marine protected areas](#)).
- **TRANSIT PROVISION:** Groundfish species or species groups that are closed to take and/or possession in part of a groundfish management area (state and federal Marine Protected Areas, or other closure areas) may be possessed aboard a vessel **when anchored, drifting, or** in transit through the closed area with no fishing gear deployed in the water (§27.20(b)(1)(A)). **While anchoring, drifting, or transiting through an area closed to take and/or possession of these groundfish species or species groups, no gear may be deployed other than for the take of crustaceans with hoop nets, Dungeness crab traps, and dip nets (§29.80(b), §29.80(c), §28.80).**
- **Regulations for California sheephead and ocean whitefish are now located on the CDFW [Sportfishing Regulations website](#)**

2023 Seasons and Depth Limits for Boat-based Anglers

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

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	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nearshore Rockfish: (§1.91(a)(1) and §28.55) black, black and yellow, blue, brown, calico, China, copper, gopher, grass, kelp, olive, and quillback rockfishes; treefish 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 Cabezon and Greenlings (§28.28 and §28.29) Lingcod (§28.27)				Apr 1 – Sep 15: Take and/or possession is authorized shoreward of a line approximating the 40-fathom depth contour. The 40-fathom depth contour is defined by straight lines connecting the set of 40-fathom waypoints as adopted in Federal regulations (50 CFR Part 660, Subpart C) Quillback rockfish may not be taken or possessed.						Sep 16 – Dec 31: Closed		
California Scorpionfish (§28.54) Pacific Sanddabs and "Other Flatfish" (§28.48) rock, sand, butter, curlfin, rex, and flathead soles Petrale Sole and Starry Flounder (§28.47)	Open year-round, No depth limit											

THESE GROUND FISH SPECIES MAY NOT BE TAKEN IN THE COWCOD CONSERVATION AREAS:

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

Slope Rockfish (§1.91(a)(4)) aurora, bank, blackgill, darkblotched, redbanded, rougheye, sharpchin, shortraker, splitnose, and yellowmouth rockfishes; Pacific ocean perch	Leopard Shark (§28.56)	Other Federal Groundfish (§28.49) soupfin shark, Dover sole, English sole, arrowtooth flounder, spiny dogfish, skates, ratfish, grenadiers, finescale codling, pacific cod, pacific whiting, sablefish, and thornyheads
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2023 Daily Bag Limit and Minimum Size Limit for All Anglers and Divers

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Species	Daily Bag Limit	Min. Size Limit ³	Filleting Aboard a Vessel ⁴
Nearshore and Shelf Rockfishes ONLY, Cabezon and Greenlings (§1.91 (a)(1), 1.91(a)(3), 28.55, 28.28, and 28.29).	10 fish in combination per person EXCEPT: Copper rockfish: 1 fish per person Quillback rockfish: Quillback rockfish may not be taken or possessed Vermilion rockfish: 4 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
California Scorpionfish (§28.54)	5 fish per person	10" total length	Minimum 5" in length with a 1" square patch of skin on each fillet
Pacific Sanddabs and "Other Flatfish" (§28.48) rock, sand, butter, curlfin, rex, and flathead soles	Pacific sanddab: No limit All "Other Flatfish": 10 fish of each species, limit 20 fish total in combination (§ 27.60(a))	No size limit	No minimum length 1" square patch of skin on each fillet
Petrale Sole and Starry Flounder (§28.47)	No limit	No size limit	No minimum length 1" square patch of skin on each fillet

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Slope Rockfish (§1.91(a)(4)) aurora, bank, blackgill, darkblotched, redbanded, rougheye, sharpchin, shortraker, splitnose, and yellowmouth rockfishes; Pacific ocean perch	Leopard Shark (§28.56)	Other Federal Groundfish (§28.49) soupfin shark, Dover sole, English sole, arrowtooth flounder, spiny dogfish, skates, ratfish, grenadiers, finescale codling, pacific cod, pacific whiting, sablefish, and thornyheads
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1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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).