



2026 Southern Management Area Recreational Groundfish Regulations Summary^{1, 2, 3}



34°27' N. latitude (Point Conception) to
the U.S.-Mexico Border (§27.45(a))

Updated January 1, 2026

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. (California Code of Regulations, Title 14).
(Shore-based anglers and divers are exempt from seasons and depths²)

Certain areas may further prohibit or restrict fishing (e.g., [marine protected areas](#))^{1, 3}

Groundfish Exclusion Areas: Eight Groundfish Exclusion Areas (GEAs) are in place which restrict certain fishing activities within these area boundaries (§27.50)^{1, 3}

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 - No Retention at any time:
Bronzespotted Rockfish, Cowcod, [Quillback Rockfish](#), and [Yelloweye Rockfish](#) (§28.55)

Nearshore Rockfish, Cabezon and Greenling Regulations	Shelf And Slope Rockfish and Lingcod Regulations
<p>Nearshore Rockfish: (§1.91(a)(1)) black, black and yellow, blue, brown, calico, China, copper, gopher, grass, kelp, and olive rockfishes; treefish</p> <p>Cabezon and Greenlings (§28.28 and §28.29)</p>	<p>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/sunset, widow, and yellowtail rockfishes</p> <p>Slope Rockfish, (§1.91(a)(4)) aurora, bank, blackgill, darkblotched, redbanded, rougheye, sharpchin, shortraker, splitnose, and yellowmouth rockfishes; Pacific ocean perch</p> <p>Lingcod (§28.27)</p>
Jan 1 – Mar 31: Closed - unlawful to possess in all waters	Jan 1 – Mar 31: Closed - unlawful to possess in all waters
April 1 – June 30: Open all depths	April 1 – June 30: Open all depths
<p style="text-align: center;">July 1 – Sep 30: 50 Fathom - Inshore Only</p> <p>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)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">July 1 – Sep 30: 50 Fathom - Inshore Only</p> <p>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)</p>
Oct 1 – Dec 31: Closed - unlawful to possess in all waters	<p style="text-align: center;">Oct 1 – Dec 31: 50 Fathom - Offshore Only</p> <p>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)</p>

2026 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/sunset rockfish:</u> 2 fish per person combined <u>Canary rockfish:</u> 2 fish per person	All Rockfish: No minimum size limit Cabezon and Greenlings: No minimum size limit	All Rockfish: No minimum length. Fillets must have entire skin attached Cabezon and Greenlings: No minimum length. Fillets must have the entire skin attached
Lingcod (§28.27)	2 fish per person	22" total length	Minimum 14" in length with the entire skin attached

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 (§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, except those listed in §28.55(b)(1), may be taken and/or possessed year-round. 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 §28.90, all species, except those listed in §28.55(b)(1), may be taken and/or possessed year-round. 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. 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 §29.80(b), Dungeness crab traps used pursuant to §29.80(c), and dip nets used pursuant to §28.80 (§27.20(b)(1)(A)).
 - It is unlawful to possess a groundfish species or species group within a Groundfish Management Area (GMA) where the take and possession of those species are prohibited in all waters of that GMA or in excess of the bag limit of that GMA, regardless of if the groundfish species or species group were taken in a different GMA where the take or possession is authorized (§27.20(b)(1)(A)(1)).
4. No person shall take or possess any federal groundfish as defined in §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)(2)).
5. 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 (§1.62). A measurement method illustration is available in the current Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations booklet, available on the CDFW website.
6. 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 (§27.65(a)). No person shall fillet on any boat or bring ashore as fillets any fish except in accordance with requirements established in §27.65(b). See regulations for information on gear restrictions (§28.65 – 29.00) and species-specific fillet regulations (§27.65).

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