

NOTICE OF PROPOSED EMERGENCY REGULATIONS
Amend Sections 150.06, and 150.16
Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR)
Re: Rescinding of Select Commercial Groundfish Management Measures

June 27, 2025

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

that the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) proposes to amend sections 150.06, and 150.16, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR) to rescind application of the Commercial Groundfish Restriction Area (CGRA) and associated 20-fathom boundary line for commercial groundfish fisheries north of 37° 07' N latitude (Año Nuevo). The proposed action would also extend federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish stocks into state waters north of 37° 07' N latitude and commercial retention of quillback rockfish would remain prohibited, statewide. The area to the south of 37° 07' N latitude would remain unchanged. Language clarifying that the continuous transit exception applies when the CGRA is in effect or in other closed waters is also proposed to be added.

THE DEPARTMENT IS PROVIDING NOTICE

pursuant to the requirements of Government Code Section 11346.1, of proposed emergency action with regard to the above-entitled emergency regulation. The documents outlining the proposed emergency action can be found on the Department's webpage at:

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Notices/Regulations/Commercial-Groundfish-2025>

Government Code section 11346.1(a)(2) requires that, at least five working days prior to submission of the proposed emergency action to the Office of Administrative Law, the adopting agency provide a notice of the proposed emergency action to every person who has filed a request for notice of regulatory action with the agency. After submission of the proposed emergency to the Office of Administrative Law, the Office of Administrative Law shall allow interested persons five calendar days to submit comments on the proposed emergency regulations as set forth in Government Code section 11349.6.

WRITTEN COMMENT PERIOD

Any interested person may present statements, arguments, or contentions, in writing, submitted via U.S. mail or e-mail, relevant to the proposed emergency regulatory action. Written comments submitted via U.S. mail or e-mail must be received at OAL within five days after the Department submits the emergency regulations to OAL for review.

Please reference submitted comments as regarding “CDFW Emergency Regulations: Rescinding of Select Commercial Groundfish Management Measures” addressed to:

Reference Attorney
Office of Administrative Law
300 Capitol Mall, Suite 1250
Sacramento, CA 95814
Email: staff@oal.ca.gov
Fax No.: 916-323-6826

Department of Fish and Wildlife
Marine Region - Groundfish
Attn: Andre Klein
20 Lower Ragsdale Drive, Suite 100
Monterey, CA 93940
Email: groundfish@wildlife.ca.gov

The Department anticipates it will submit the rulemaking to OAL on or after July 7, 2025. For the status of the Department’s submittal to OAL for review, and the end of the five-day written submittal period, please consult OAL's website at <http://www.oal.ca.gov> under the heading “Emergency Regulations.”

INFORMATIVE DIGEST/POLICY STATEMENT OVERVIEW

(Gov. Code, § 11346.5, subd. (a)(3))

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) proposes an emergency action to amend sections 150.06, and 150.16, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR) to rescind application of the California Groundfish Restriction Area (CGRA) and associated 20-fathom boundary line for commercial groundfish fisheries north of 37° 07' N latitude (Año Nuevo).

BACKGROUND

Previous information indicated the California quillback rockfish population was in decline and in need of protection, based upon the 2021 quillback rockfish data moderate stock assessment. In response to the National Marine Fisheries Service formally [declaring the California stock of quillback rockfish \(*Sebastes maliger*\) as overfished](#), exceedance of the small allowable harvest amount and recommended changes to the commercial groundfish fishery made by the Pacific Fishery Management Council over the winter of 2023, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) took [emergency action on February 12, 2024](#).

The emergency action authorized the take of nearshore rockfish, except for quillback rockfish, greenlings of the genus *Hexagrammos* and California scorpionfish (collectively known as nearshore groundfish) shoreward of the CGRA and associated 20-fathom boundary line. It also prohibited the take of non-nearshore groundfish stocks in state waters north of 36° N latitude (near Point Lopez). The southern boundary of the CGRA was later modified such that these regulations only applied north of 37° 07' N latitude. A Certificate of Compliance, which was approved on March 17, 2025 made these modified emergency regulations permanent.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RECIND THE CGRA

On June 9, 2025, the draft stock assessment for quillback rockfish off California became available. This new, more robust assessment of the quillback rockfish stock indicates the California stock is healthy and not overfished as indicated by the 2021 quillback rockfish data moderate stock assessment. The 2025 stock assessment is more thorough and indicates expected allowable harvest limits will be substantially higher; however, they are unlikely to accommodate retention of quillback rockfish.

Therefore, the previous conservation emergency no longer exists, and the associated fishery closure and depth restrictions in state waters are now unwarranted. The emergency need for this action serves the general welfare by restoring commercial groundfish fishery opportunities for important target species that were restricted in state waters as a result of being harvested along with quillback rockfish. It is important to immediately end the unnecessary harm to commercial fish businesses by the now currently unwarranted constraints on the groundfish fishery. Preliminary estimates, indicate the prohibition on non-nearshore stocks in state waters may be resulting in a

decrease of ex-vessel revenue to nearshore participants of approximately 40 percent. This lost revenue may have offset operational costs and may be contributing to a decrease in nearshore landings when comparing the three-year average preceding the emergency action taken in 2024.

The Department's proposed action would "turn off" the CGRA and associated 20-fathom boundary line for commercial groundfish fisheries north of 37° 07' N latitude. Additionally, the proposed action would use state authority to extend federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish stocks into state waters north of 37° 07' N latitude and commercial retention of quillback rockfish would remain prohibited, statewide. Regulations specific to the area to the south of 37° 07' N latitude would remain unchanged. Language clarifying that the continuous transit exception applies when the CGRA is in effect or in other closed waters is also proposed to be added.

Benefits of the Proposed Regulation

The Department anticipates the proposed regulations will have positive impacts on the commercial nearshore and non-nearshore fisheries and the coastal economies that rely upon them. Thus, this regulation will promote general welfare among Californians by increasing availability of sustainable seafood protein and reestablishing economic opportunities for commercial groundfish fishers and those that rely upon them. The current constraining regulations were put into place to protect quillback rockfish and are no longer needed based upon the latest updated science. By allowing these regulations to remain in place, impacted parties face unwarranted economic harm.

The proposed emergency regulations are informed by the most current understanding of the quillback rockfish stock, which indicates the stock is healthy. These regulations are designed to restore access, economic opportunity and relieve commercial groundfish participants of undue burden, while also not adversely impacting quillback rockfish. Commercial retention of quillback rockfish will remain prohibited under the proposed regulations and as a result there is little risk to the resource.

Consistency and Compatibility with Existing Regulations

The Legislature may delegate to Department such powers relating to the protection and propagation of fish and game as the Legislature sees fit. Department staff has searched the California Code of Regulations and has determined that other state regulations that apply to groundfish species are not inconsistent nor incompatible with the proposed regulations. The Department therefore finds that the proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations.