

State of California
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Initial Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action
Certificate of Compliance

Amend Sections 150.06 and 150.16
Title 14, California Code of Regulations

Re: Rescinding of Select Commercial Groundfish Management Measures

I. Date of Initial Statement of Reasons: December 10, 2025

II. Date and Location of Scheduled Public Hearing

Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 1:00 to 2:00 pm PST

Location: Teleconference and Webinar
Meeting access and details will be available on the CDFW Proposed Regulations webpage: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Notices/Regulations>
Please check the website during the week prior for any changes.

III. Description of Regulatory Action

(a) Statement of Specific Purpose of Regulatory Change and Factual Basis for Determining that Regulation Change is Reasonably Necessary

Unless otherwise specified, all section and subsection references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

Sections 150.06 and 150.16 were amended by emergency action and subsequently approved by the Office of Administrative Law on August 21, 2025 (OAL #2025-0811-05E). This emergency action lifted certain restrictions on the commercial groundfish fishery due to updated information about the health of quillback rockfish (*Sebastes maliger*). Therefore, the previous conservation emergency no longer exists, and the associated depth-based restrictions and prohibition on the retention of non-nearshore groundfish stocks are unwarranted. This Certificate of Compliance, in accordance with Government Code Section 11349.6, Review of Proposed Regulations, proposes to permanently adopt regulations which are not materially different from those recently approved by prior emergency action. The proposed Certificate of Compliance is necessary to make the rescission of the prior restrictions permanent.

Background

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) works with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the states of Oregon and Washington, and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) to manage West Coast groundfish recreational and commercial fisheries, including off the coast of California, on a sustainable basis. One of the groundfish species, quillback rockfish has driven management actions taken recently.

Results of a 2021 quillback rockfish data-moderate stock assessment concluded that the population of quillback rockfish off California was in severe decline and estimated

the population at only 14 percent of the unfished population. This data-moderate stock assessment utilized limited data sources and incorporated proxy data from other states. At the time, the 2021 stock assessment was deemed acceptable for use in federal management and NOAA Fisheries subsequently declared the California stock of quillback rockfish as overfished¹, and a rebuilding plan for the species was adopted by the PFMC.

At its November 2023 meeting, the PFMC recommended inseason changes to close the commercial nearshore fishery off California north of 36° N latitude (near Point Lopez). This change was recommended in order to limit the mortality of quillback because it was estimated that the federally specified harvest limits for the stock off California had been significantly exceeded in 2023 (88 Federal Register (FR) 67656, October 2, 2023).

Prior to February 2024, California’s regulations established trip limits for commercial take of groundfish, which includes both shallow nearshore rockfish and deeper nearshore rockfish, and California scorpionfish in state waters² by incorporating federally established commercial groundfish regulations.

However, this resulted in effectively closing the state permitted commercial nearshore fishery – a restricted access fishery with limited participants – while permitting the commercial fishery for non-nearshore stocks (which does not limit the number of participants) to continue. In the absence of state action, mortality of quillback rockfish was likely to continue to occur, and the commercial nearshore fishery would remain closed. As a result, the Department undertook an series of emergency rulemakings.

- February 12, 2024: emergency regulations adding section 35.00 (defining the 20-fathom boundary line), amending section 150.06 (establishing the commercial California Groundfish Restriction Area (CGRA)) and amending section 150.16 (generally prohibiting take of non-nearshore groundfish stocks and establishing trip limits for state permitted nearshore groundfish species³) along with minor amendments to section 189 were approved. The 20-fathom boundary line, GRCA and prohibition on the take of non-nearshore groundfish stocks were implemented north of 36° N latitude.
- March 2024: the PFMC recommended changing the southern boundary of the area

¹ “Overfished” describes any stock or stock complex whose size is sufficiently diminished that a change in management practices is required to achieve an appropriate level and rate of rebuilding. The term generally describes any stock or stock complex determined to be below its overfished/rebuilding threshold. The default proxy is generally 25 percent of its estimated unfished biomass; however, other scientifically valid values are also authorized.

² The offshore boundary of the state’s sovereign lands was established in 2014 by an order entered by the United States Supreme Court in the case of *United States of America, Plaintiff v. State of California*, 135 S. Ct. 563; 190 L. Ed. 2d 514; 2014 U.S. LEXIS 8436 (2014). This action by the United States Supreme Court permanently fixes the offshore boundary between the United States and California, resolving a dispute that began in 1935 with the discovery of oil in Wilmington, California. There is now a fixed boundary approximately 3 nautical miles off the coast of California extending from Mexico to Oregon, providing certainty to state and federal lessors, regulators, lessees, and operators of federal and state mineral and renewable-energy leasing programs.

³ Includes nearshore (“shallow”) rockfish: black-and-yellow, gopher, kelp, China and grass rockfishes; deeper nearshore rockfish: black, blue, brown, calico, copper, olive and quillback rockfishes, and treefish; cabezon, California scorpionfish and greenlings of the genus *Hexagrammos*.

impacted by the federal constraints from 36° N latitude to 37° 07' N latitude (Año Nuevo). The NMFS implemented this change on April 1, 2024.

- August 21, 2024: with the first re-adoption of the emergency regulations, the Department amended sections 150.06 and 150.16 to establish the southern boundary of the 20-fathom boundary line and CGRA at 37° 07' N latitude.
- November 13, 2024: these regulations, as modified, were re-adopted to allow for sufficient time to complete a standard rulemaking.
- March 17, 2025: a standard certificate of compliance rulemaking was adopted, permanently establishing the regulations, as modified.

On June 9, 2025, a draft stock assessment for quillback rockfish off California became available. This new, more robust assessment considered all available data sources, including newly available California-specific life history information, and did not rely on proxy data from other states as the 2021 data-moderate assessment had. The 2025 assessment results indicate that the California quillback stock is healthy and not overfished, a major reversal from the 2021 data-moderate stock assessment.

The 2025 assessment indicates a substantially higher allowable harvest limit than the current allowable harvest limit. For example, the new stock assessment estimates an Overfishing Limit, which is the estimate of the amount that can be caught without risking depletion of the stock, of 13.52 metric tons (mt), a significant increase from the 1.50 mt set in federal regulations based on the 2021 data-moderate assessment. Despite the improved stock health, the amount of quillback rockfish available to harvest is insufficient to permit retention and therefore quillback rockfish will remain prohibited.

In response to the draft quillback rockfish stock assessment, at its June 2025 meeting, the PFMC recommended NMFS proceed as quickly as possible to implement inseason changes to commercial groundfish fisheries off California. The recommended inseason changes included removing the federal regulatory constraints that were implemented to protect quillback rockfish.

Therefore, the associated depth-based restrictions and prohibition on the retention of non-nearshore groundfish stocks north of 37° 07' N latitude are unwarranted. Prior to August 21, 2025, commercial groundfish regulations pertinent to this action included:

- Section 150.06 defined the CGRA as the area north of 37° 07' N latitude and between the 20-fathom boundary line and the seaward extent of the Exclusive Economic Zone. Further, this section prohibits the take and retention or possession of federal groundfish within the CGRA, except for the purposes of continuous transit.
- Section 150.16 established trip limits are for commercial take of groundfish. The table in subsection (e)(5)(A) provided trip limits in the area where the CGRA was in effect, between 42° (Oregon/California border) and 37° 07' N latitude. While the table in subsection (e)(5)(B) provided trip limits for the area south of 37° 07' N latitude. Further, north of 37° 07' N latitude, subsection (f)(1) prohibited the take of

all other groundfish for which trip limits are not specified in (e)(5)(A), except for purposes of continuous transit and an allowance for the take of yellowtail rockfish by salmon trollers. Subsection (f)(2) extended federal trip limits for all other non-nearshore groundfish into state water south of 37° 07' N latitude.

Original Emergency Regulations

With the adoption (approved by the Office of Administrative Law August 21, 2025, OAL 2025-0811-05E) of the original emergency regulations, and in summary, the following modifications were made:

- Subsection 150.06(a) was amended to remove the CGRA;
- Subsection 150.16(e)(5)(A) was amended to apply between 42° and 40° 10' N latitude and added provisions for the take of lingcod and the other flatfish complex, and all other federal groundfish;
- Subsection 150.16(e)(5)(B) was amended to apply south of 40° 10' N latitude and added provisions for the take of lingcod and the other flatfish complex, and all other federal groundfish;
- Subsection 150.16(e)(5)(C) was amended to correctly reference the subsection for the required notice period;
- Subsection 150.16(f)(1) was amended to extend federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish stocks (excluding lingcod and the other flatfish complex) into state waters;
- Subsection 150.16(f)(1)(A) and (f)(1)(B) were deleted due to the removal of the GRCA;
- Subsection 150.16(f)(2) was amended to extend federal trip limits for lingcod and the other flatfish complex into state waters; and,
- Subsection 150.16(g) was added to specify that state and federal trip limits are not additive.



Figure 1. Map of the emergency regulations, effective August 21, 2025, which rescinded application of or “turned off” the CGRA and associated 20-fathom boundary line north of 37° 07' N latitude. Near Cape Mendocino, 40° 10' N latitude is also displayed because each trip limit table was modified to apply north and south of that latitudinal line. However, the trip limit amounts authorized did not change.

The Department’s present emergency action became effective on August 21, 2025, and will be in effect for 180 days through February 18, 2026. These emergency regulations extend federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish into state waters; and rescind the application of the CGRA and associated 20-fathom boundary line for commercial groundfish fisheries north of 37° 07' N latitude (Figure 1). Commercial retention of quillback rockfish continued to be prohibited, statewide.

On September 18, 2025, the NMFS promulgated an inseason regulation (90 Federal Register 44998) which removed federal regulatory constraints that were implemented to

protect quillback rockfish. Of importance to the Department's Certificate of Compliance rulemaking, federal regulations no longer specify that the trip limits for lingcod or the other flatfish complex may only be taken in a specific portion of federal waters. As a result, amendments to the original emergency regulations are proposed to reduce regulatory complexity.

Proposed Regulations

Occurring on a similar timeline to this proposed certificate of compliance rulemaking, the Department will be pursuing re-adoption of the emergency regulations amending sections 150.06 and 150.16 (OAL #2025-0811-05E). This will afford the Department sufficient time to complete the proposed certificate of compliance rulemaking, otherwise commercial groundfish regulations would revert back to the more constraining regulations in place at the start of 2025.

Identical amendments are proposed to the original emergency regulations in both the re-adoption and this certificate of compliance rulemakings. Due to the federal inseason change, trip limits for lingcod and other flatfish may be taken in all federal waters. Therefore, the level of specificity and incorporation by reference of certain federal tables (Tables 2b and 3b North; and 2b and 3b South) in Section 150.16 amended through the original emergency action, is no longer needed. As a result, the regulatory text is proposed to be amended back to that which was in place prior to the original emergency action and extended federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish stocks into state waters. Therefore, these proposed amendments do not materially change what was authorized under the original emergency regulations.

The proposed certificate of compliance action is necessary as it serves the general welfare by restoring commercial groundfish fishery opportunities for important target species that were restricted in state waters, while also complimenting changes to federal regulations regarding the commercial take of groundfish north of 37° 07' N latitude.

Necessity Statements for Amendments to Original Emergency Regulations

Section 150.06

Section 150,06 as previously amended and adopted originally as an emergency is unchanged and proposed for permanent adoption.

Section 150.16

Section 150.16 as previously amended and adopted originally as an emergency is proposed for permanent adoption with the following closely related amendments.

- Changes are necessary to the table in subsection 150.16(e)(5)(A) to increase clarity and reduce regulatory complexity, while also complimenting recent federal action. The following modifications are proposed to the table:

- Part 2 “California scorpionfish” the footnote “1” is deleted. This footnote is redundant as subsection (g) accomplishes this for all groundfish;
 - Part 8 “Lingcod and other flatfish complex” (added in the original emergency text) is proposed to be deleted because of the recent federal inseason action, which removed the area specific designation for trip limits of lingcod and the other flatfish complex;
 - Part 9 “all other federal groundfish” is renumbered Part 8 and footnote “2” is removed, replaced by “(defined in Section 1.91)”; and,
 - Footnotes “1” and “2” below the table are deleted, as they were removed or replaced in the above modifications.
- Changes are necessary to the table in subsection 150.16(e)(5)(B) to increase clarity and reduce regulatory complexity, while also complimenting recent federal action. The following modifications are proposed to the table:
 - Part 2 California scorpionfish the footnote “1” [the superscript is mistakenly missing] is deleted. This footnote is redundant as subsection (g) accomplishes this for all groundfish;
 - Part 8 “Lingcod and other flatfish complex” (adopted in the original emergency text) is proposed to be deleted because of the recent federal inseason action, which removed the area specific designation for trip limits of lingcod and the other flatfish complex;
 - Part 9 “all other federal groundfish” is renumbered Part 8 and footnote 2 is removed, replaced by “(defined in Section 1.91)”; and,
 - Footnotes “1” and “2” below the table are deleted, as they were removed or replaced in the above modifications.

Subsection (e)(5)(C) is proposed for non-substantial amendment to remove “as defined in 14 CCR” and replaced with “(subsection 1.91(a)(1))”.

- Subsection (f) is proposed to be amended to extend federal trip limits for all non-nearshore groundfish into state waters. With the recent federal inseason regulatory changes, the trip limits for lingcod and the other flatfish complex now apply to all federal waters, where previously, they only applied to a discrete portion. As a result, subsection (f), as amended, extends federal trip limits into state waters and applies to all federal groundfish. This is necessary to reduce regulatory complexity and complement federal regulations.
- Subsection (f)(1) is proposed to be deleted as it is no longer necessary to extend federal trip limits for some groundfish stocks (excluding lingcod and the other flatfish complex) into state waters due to the amendment of subsection (f).
- Subsection (f)(2) is proposed to be deleted since it is no longer necessary to extend trip limits only for lingcod and the other flatfish complex into state waters due the

federal inseason change allowing for these trip limits to be taken in all federal waters and amendment of subsection (f). Subsequently, the federal Tables 2b (North) and 2b (South) and Tables 3b (North) and 3b (South) incorporated by reference are deleted. These tables are no longer necessary as the federal trip limits now apply to the entirety of federal waters, no longer a discrete portion thereof.

Prior Necessity Statements for Original Emergency Regulations – Approved August 21, 2025

Aside from the amendments in section 150.16 subsections (e)(5)(A), (e)(5)(B), (e)(5)(C), (f), (f)(1) and (f)(2), noted above, the following explanations, by subsection, were reflected in the original emergency statement and remain unchanged.

Section 150.06

- Subsection 150.06(a) was amended to delete, thus rescinding, the application of the CGRA north of 37° 07' N latitude (Año Nuevo), though the defined purpose of the CGRA remains in regulation. This was necessary because the CGRA was no longer needed, though should it be needed for future management purposes, it could be reimplemented or “turned on”.
- Subsection 150.06(b) was amended adding clarification that the continuous transit provision applies when the CGRA is in effect or in other closed waters. This change was necessary because the CGRA was removed and increased clarity was needed so that this provision would apply in other closed waters (e.g., no-take Marine Protected Area).
- Subsection 150.06(c) was amended to specify that season closure(s) due to quota attainment for federal groundfish will extend federal trip limits into all state waters, statewide. Therefore, the limitation to waters south of 37° 07' N lat. (Año Nuevo) was deleted. This change was necessary because the emergency regulations extended federal trip limits into state waters, statewide

Section 150.16

- Subsection 150.16(e)(5)(A) was amended to specify trip limits between 42° N latitude (Oregon/California border) and 40° 10' N latitude (near Cape Mendocino), remove references to the CGRA in Section 150.06 and clarify where trip limits for lingcod, the other flatfish complex and all other federal groundfish may be found. These changes were necessary because the CGRA was removed, as a result, it was no longer necessary to specify trip limits within the areas to which it previously applied, provide location reference to the latitudinal lines and to add clarity as to where regulatory text pertaining to lingcod, other flatfish complex and all other federal groundfish would be found. To accomplish this, Subsection 150.16(e)(5)(A) Table parts:
 - 1 through 5 were not changed;
 - 6 and 7 were deleted;

- 8 and 9 were renumbered 6 and 7;
 - 8 was added to provide provisions for lingcod and the other flatfish complex;
 - 9 was added to provide provisions for all other federal groundfish; and,
 - 10, 11 and 12 were deleted.
- Subsection 150.16(e)(5)(B) was amended to specify trip limits south of 40° 10' N latitude and clarify where trip limits for lingcod, the other flatfish complex and all other federal groundfish would be found. These changes were necessary because the area to which subsection 150.16(e)(5)(A) applies was amended, provide location reference to the latitude line and to add clarity as to where regulatory text pertaining to lingcod, the other flatfish complex and all other federal groundfish would be found. To accomplish this, Subsection 150.16(e)(5)(B) Table parts:
 - 1 through 7 were not changed.
 - 8 was amended to provide provisions for lingcod and the other flatfish complex; and,
 - 9 was added to provide provisions for all other federal groundfish.
 - Subsection 150.16(e)(5)(C) was amended to correct a non-substantive error changing the reference for the required notice period from (e)(6)(C) to the appropriate subsection (e)(5)(D).
 - Subsection 150.16(f)(1) was amended to establish commercial trip limits for all other non-nearshore groundfish, except lingcod and the other flatfish complex, by using state authority to extend federal trip limits into state waters, statewide. This change was necessary because previously federal trip limits were only extended south of 37° 07' N latitude. Additionally, federal trip limits for lingcod and the other flatfish complex cannot be included in this subsection because they were only specified in a portion of federal waters (and zero for the remainder of federal waters) to the north. While in the south federal trip limits for lingcod and the other flatfish complex are specified in all federal waters. It was necessary to exclude lingcod and the other flatfish complex from this subsection so that this ambiguity could be addressed in subsection (f)(2).
 - Subsection 150.16(f)(1)(A) was deleted. This change was necessary because application the CGRA in subsection 150.06(a) was rescinded (i.e., “turned off”), as a result a continuous transit exception for the possession of groundfish within the CGRA was no longer needed.
 - Subsection 150.16(f)(1)(B) was deleted. This change was necessary because application the CGRA had been rescinded (i.e., “turned off”) and therefore an exception for retention of yellowtail rockfish by salmon trollers within the CGRA was no longer needed.
 - Subsections 150.16(f)(2) was amended to extend federal trip limits for lingcod and the other flatfish complex into state waters, irrespective if the limit was only specified

for a portion of federal waters, utilizing the state's authority. This change was necessary to remove ambiguity whether a trip limit was extended into state waters in instances where the federal trip limit was limited to a certain area.

- Subsection 150.16(g) was added to specify that vessels fishing in both state and federal waters are not entitled to additive trip limits. This change was necessary to ensure vessels fishing in both state and federal waters do not take double the allowable limit.
- Subsection 150.16(g) was renumbered to (h). This was necessary due to the addition of (g).
- Subsection 150.16(h) was renumbered to (i). This was necessary due to the renumbering of (h).

(b) Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

The Department anticipates this proposed certificate of compliance action 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 proposed 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.

(c) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation

Section 150.06

Authority cited: Sections 7071, 7652 and 8587.1, Fish and Game Code.

Reference: Sections 7071, 7652, 8585.5 and 8587.1, Fish and Game Code.

Section 150.16

Authority cited: Sections 702, 7071 and 8587.1 Fish and Game Code.

Reference: Sections 1802, 8585.5, 8586, 8587 and 8587.1, Fish and Game Code.

(d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change

None.

(e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change

Langseth, B.J., M.H. Monk, J.H. Coates, 2025. Status of the Quillback rockfish stock in U.S. waters off the coast of California in 2025. Pacific Fishery Management Council, Portland, OR.

https://pam.pcouncil.org/documents/quillback_rockfish_sar_2025-pdf/

September 2025, 90 Federal Register 44998 – Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries Off West Coast States; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; 2025-2026 Biennial Specifications and Management Measures; Inseason Adjustments:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/09/18/2025-18079/magnuson-stevens-act-provisions-fisheries-off-west-coast-states-pacific-coast-groundfish-fishery>

Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan for California, Oregon, and Washington Groundfish Fishery. June 2025. Pacific Fishery Management Council. <https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2022/08/pacific-coast-groundfish-fishery-management-plan.pdf/>

Langseth, B.J., C.R. Wetzel, J.M. Cope, J.E. Budrick. 2021. Status of quillback rockfish (*Sebastes maliger*) in U.S. waters off the coast of California in 2021 using catch and length data. Pacific Fisheries Management Council, Portland, OR.

<https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2021/12/status-of-quillback-rockfish-sebastes-maliger-in-u-s-waters-off-the-coast-of-california-in-2021-using-catch-and-length-data-december-2021.pdf/>

(f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication

June 2025 – PFMC meeting in Rohnert Park, CA. Various public and technical discussions were held at the meeting venue, with the opportunity for both in-person and remote public comment regarding the proposed federal regulatory changes.

September 2025 – PFMC meeting in Spokane, WA, and remote participation. Standing agenda item “Inseason Adjustments.” PFMC received reports from CDFW summarizing emergency changes to state commercial regulations.

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No other alternatives were identified by or brought to the attention of Department staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect. The permanent adoption of the emergency regulation, as amended in this certificate of compliance, is required to remove unnecessary constraints on the commercial groundfish fishery, restore access to healthy groundfish stocks and economic opportunity to commercial groundfish fishers and the communities that rely upon them.

(b) No Change Alternative

Without the adoption of this certificate of compliance, at the end of the emergency period, the emergency commercial groundfish regulations will be repealed and the regulations will revert to the more restrictive regulations that were in place north of 37° 07' N latitude prior to August 21, 2025. The more restrictive regulations are no longer warranted given the improved status of the quillback rockfish stock off of California. Preliminary estimates indicate that the more restrictive regulations that were put into place to protect quillback rockfish resulted in a decrease in landings (or poundage of

fish) for nearshore fishery participants of approximately 35 percent, or roughly \$375,000 to \$400,000, when compared to the five-year average preceding their implementation. Additionally, under the No Change Alternative, state regulations will not compliment federal regulation, which is likely to cause confusion among stakeholders and enforcement.

(c) Description of Reasonable Alternatives that Would Lessen Adverse Impact on Small Business

There is no reasonable alternative that would have less of an impact on small businesses operating in the commercial groundfish fishery. Without the proposed certificate of compliance regulations, north of 37° 07' N latitude, nearshore participants and local communities that rely upon this fishery would not be allowed to retain other federal groundfish they may encounter while pursuing nearshore groundfish stocks. This would continue the adverse economic impacts to commercial groundfish nearshore fishery participants and the local communities. Additionally, in absence of the purposed certificate of compliance regulations, commercial groundfish fishery participants who do not hold nearshore permits would be prohibited from fishing in state waters, thereby subjecting them to undue burden.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

VI. 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 initial 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 Department does not anticipate that the proposed action will have significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed regulations removing the CGRA and extending federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish stocks into state waters north of 37° 07' N latitude, will increase commercial groundfish fishing opportunity. No new fees are imposed as a result of the proposed regulations, nor are any indirect costs imposed, such as the travel costs that would arise from forcing commercial fishers to target groundfish in federal waters or from costs associated with new reporting requirements.

(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 Department does not anticipate adverse impacts on the creation or elimination of

jobs within the state given that the proposed amendments are to increase commercial groundfish opportunities in state waters. The Department does not anticipate adverse impacts on the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California. The proposed changes are to remove unnecessary restrictions, which would increase opportunity not only for nearshore fishery participants, but also for the greater commercial groundfish fishery. The proposed regulations would allow commercial groundfish fishers who do not hold nearshore permits to take and retain non-nearshore groundfish stocks in state waters. Meanwhile, commercial nearshore fishery participants would be able to retain non-nearshore groundfish stocks they encounter while engaging in the nearshore fishery. Taken together, the proposed certificate of compliance action is not anticipated to change the annual level of harvest activity or the demand for goods and services related to marine resource harvest that could impact the demand for labor, induce the creation of new businesses, eliminate existing businesses, or cause the expansion of businesses in California. The Department does not anticipate any benefits to the health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety from the proposed action. The Department anticipates benefits to the State's environment through adoption of scientifically-based management measures and maintaining the harvest of healthy stocks.

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

The Department does not anticipate that the proposed action will have significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed regulations to remove the CGRA and extended federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish stocks north of 37° 07' N latitude will expand commercial groundfish fishing opportunity. No new fees are imposed as a result of the proposed regulations, nor are any indirect costs imposed, such as the travel costs that would arise from forcing commercial fishers to target groundfish in federal waters or from costs associated with new reporting requirements.

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

This certificate of compliance adoption of the emergency rulemaking will not result in any costs or savings to state agencies and does not affect federal funding to the state. The Department has determined that the certificate of compliance action for this commercial groundfish rulemaking will not affect license or landing fee revenues or the Department's existing level of expenditures on monitoring and enforcement activities. Additionally, no other state agencies would be affected by this regulatory action.

(e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies: None

(f) Programs Mandated on 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

VII. Economic Impact Assessment

(a) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State

The Department does not anticipate that the proposed regulation will prompt the creation or the elimination of jobs within the state. The proposed amendments would restore commercial access to all groundfish stocks in state waters north of 37° 07' N latitude. Prior to the emergency regulations currently in place, only groundfish authorized for take under a nearshore permit could be taken and retained shoreward of the CGRA. Commercial fishers pursuing other non-nearshore groundfish would have to do so outside of state waters. As a result, the proposed amendments are not expected to negatively affect current harvest activity, nor would they precipitate the creation of jobs or the elimination of jobs.

(b) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses Within the State

The Department does not anticipate that the proposed regulation would induce impacts on the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state. The proposed regulation is not anticipated to increase demand for services or products from the existing businesses that serve individuals who engage in groundfish harvest. The proposed amendments would restore commercial access to all groundfish stocks in state waters north of 37° 07' N latitude.

(c) Effects of the Regulation on the Expansion of Businesses Currently Doing Business Within the State

The Department does not anticipate that the proposed regulation would induce impacts on the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state. The proposed amendments would restore commercial access to all groundfish stocks in state waters north of 37° 07' N latitude. Prior to the emergency regulations currently in place, only groundfish authorized for take under a nearshore permit could be taken and retained shoreward of the CGRA. Commercial fishers pursuing other non-nearshore groundfish would have to do so outside of state waters. As a result, it is not anticipated to increase demand for services or products from the existing businesses that serve individuals who engage in commercial groundfish harvest.

(d) Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

The Department does not anticipate benefits to the health and welfare of California residents because the proposed regulatory change has no relation to health or welfare.

(e) Benefits of the Regulation to Worker Safety

The Department does not anticipate any benefits to worker safety in California because this action will not affect working conditions.

(f) Benefits of the Regulation to the State's Environment

The Department anticipates benefits to the State's environment directly through maintaining the harvest of healthy stocks while mitigating mortality of quillback rockfish. 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. It is the policy of this state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of the living resources of waters under the jurisdiction and influence of the state for the benefit of all the citizens of the state.

(g) Other Benefits of the Regulation

None.

Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

Sections 150.06 and 150.16 were amended by emergency action and subsequently approved by the Office of Administrative Law on August 21, 2025 (OAL #2025-0811-05E). This emergency action lifted certain restrictions on the commercial groundfish fishery due to updated information, indicating that the quillback rockfish (*Sebastes maliger*) stock is healthier than previously understood. Therefore, the previous conservation needs no longer exists, and the associated depth-based restrictions and prohibition on the retention of non-nearshore groundfish stocks are unwarranted. This Certificate of Compliance, in accordance with Government Code Section 11349.6, Review of Proposed Regulations, proposes to permanently adopt regulations which are not materially different from those originally approved by emergency action. The proposed Certificate of Compliance is necessary to make the rescission of the prior restrictions permanent.

Occurring on a similar timeline to this proposed certificate of compliance rulemaking, the Department will be pursuing readoption of the emergency regulations amending sections 150.06 and 150.16 (OAL #2025-0811-05E). This will afford the Department sufficient time to complete the proposed certificate of compliance rulemaking, otherwise commercial groundfish regulations would revert back to the more constraining regulations in place at the start of 2025. It should be noted, that identical amendments are proposed to the original emergency regulations in both the readoption and this certificate of compliance rulemakings.

Due to a federal inseason regulatory change on September 18, 2025, the trip limits for lingcod and the other flatfish complex now apply to all federal waters, where previously, they only applied to a discrete portion. As a result, subsection (f), as proposed to be amended, continues to extend federal trip limits into state waters and applies to all non- nearshore federal groundfish.

The Department does propose some amendments to the original emergency regulations which either reduce regulatory complexity or are non-substantive. Specifically, the proposed amendments either remove redundant references from the trip limit tables or remove specific versions of federal trip limit tables from the State's regulatory text pertaining to lingcod and the other flatfish complex. However, these amendments do not change what is currently permissible under the emergency regulations. As a result, the Department's proposed amendments reduce regulatory complexity or are non-substantive.

Background

Results of a 2021 quillback rockfish data-moderate stock assessment concluded that the population of quillback rockfish off California was in severe decline and estimated the population at only 14 percent of the unfished population. This data-moderate stock assessment utilized limited data sources and incorporated proxy data from other states. At the time, the 2021 stock assessment was deemed acceptable for use in federal

management and NMFS subsequently declared the California stock of quillback rockfish as overfished, resulting in constraining state (e.g., CGRA, etc.) and federal regulations being implemented.

Prior to the Department's emergency rulemaking, regulations defined the California Groundfish Restriction Area (CGRA) as the area between the 20-fathom boundary line and the seaward extent of the Exclusive Economic Zone north of 37° 07' N latitude (Año Nuevo). Regulations also prohibited the take and retention or possession of federal groundfish within the CGRA, except for the purposes of continuous transit. Trip limits for nearshore groundfish species were established statewide, though the area north of 37° 07' N latitude was constrained to fishing shoreward of the 20-fathom boundary line. Further, the take of all other non-nearshore groundfish, except for an allowance for the take of yellowtail rockfish by salmon trollers, in state waters north of 37° 07' N latitude.

On June 9, 2025, a draft stock assessment for quillback rockfish off California became available. This new, more robust assessment considered all available data sources, including newly available California-specific life history information, and did not rely on proxy data from other states as the 2021 data-moderate assessment had. The 2025 assessment results indicate that the California quillback stock is healthy and not overfished, a major reversal from the 2021 data-moderate stock assessment.

The new scientific information provided by the 2025 quillback rockfish assessment indicated that the constraining regulations implemented to protect the stock were unwarranted. To reduce harm to the general welfare of the nearshore fishery, commercial groundfish fishery and coastal communities that rely upon them, the Department adopted emergency regulations to rescind the depth constraint and prohibition on the take of non-nearshore groundfish stocks in state waters. Through this proposed certificate of compliance, the Department would ensure these unwarranted constraints are removed permanently.

Benefits of the Proposed Regulation

The Department anticipates this proposed certificate of compliance action 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 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.

Consistency and Compatibility with Existing Regulations

The Legislature may delegate to Department such powers relating to the protection and commercial fishery resources as the Legislature sees fit, including the authority to adopt regulations pertaining to commercial fisheries (Fish and Game Code Section 7652). Department staff has searched the California Code of Regulations and has determined that other state regulations that apply to management of commercial groundfish fisheries 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.

The Proposed Regulation Does Not Differ or Conflict with Federal Law

The proposed regulation does not differ substantially or conflict with an existing comparable federal regulation or statute. Whereas the federal government has corresponding regulations for Nearshore Rockfish trip limits in federal waters, these trip limits will apply only in state waters. The Magnuson Stevens Act specifically reserves to the states jurisdiction to regulate fisheries in state waters. See 16 U.S.C. § 1856. The proposed regulations are designed to correspond with the federal regulations.