



## V. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

### (a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

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

### (b) No Change Alternative

Without the proposed changes, the outstanding issues concerning the regulations currently governing RCG and lingcod would remain unaddressed.

Under the No Change Alternative, the emergency regulations adopted by the Commission in August 2025 would expire **May 21, 2026**, reverting to the original regulations in place at the beginning of 2025 and would:

- Continue unwarranted constraining regulations on the fishery, causing continued harm to the fishing industry while not addressing any specific conservation benefit, and,
- Be inconsistent with federal regulations. Inconsistency in regulations would create confusion amongst the public and may result in laws that are difficult to enforce.

### (c) Consideration of Alternatives

In view of information currently possessed, no 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.

## 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 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 proposal to modify the recreational RCG and lingcod season structure regulations to restore access to all depths in state waters north of Point Conception will expand fishing opportunities for anglers and sport fishing businesses (e.g., commercial passenger **fishing** vessel businesses) targeting groundfish. No new fees are imposed as a result of the proposed regulations, nor are any indirect costs imposed on anglers or sport fishing businesses. No adverse economic impacts are anticipated as a result of implementing a 2-fish sub-bag limit for canary rockfish and adding sunset rockfish to cryptic-species vermilion/sunset rockfish management unit.

(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 impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs, the creation of new businesses, the elimination of existing businesses or the expansion of businesses in California. The proposal to modify the recreational RCG and lingcod season structure regulations to restore access to all depths in state waters north of Point Conception will expand fishing opportunities for anglers and sport fishing businesses (e.g., commercial passenger fishing vessel businesses) targeting groundfish similar to those in effect prior to October 2023, but it is expected that the time out on the water will remain largely the same, which would not create a significant increase in economic activity that would warrant the need for additional labor for commercial passenger fishing vessels. No new fees are imposed as a result of these regulations, nor are any indirect costs imposed on anglers or sport fishing businesses. No impacts to jobs or businesses are anticipated as a result of implementing a 2-fish sub-bag limit for canary rockfish and adding sunset rockfish to cryptic-species vermilion/sunset rockfish management unit. The proposed regulations do not bring any additional benefits to worker safety. Fishing is an outdoor activity that can provide several health and welfare benefits to California residents. Anglers and their families benefit from fresh fish to eat and from the benefits of outdoor recreation, including exercise. People who fish have a special connection with the outdoors and an awareness of the relationships between wildlife, habitat, and humans, and fishing can be a family tradition and a bonding activity. The Commission anticipates benefits to the state's environment by adopting scientifically-based RCG and lingcod seasons, depth constraints, and bag and possession limits to provide for the maintenance of sufficient populations of RCG and lingcod species to ensure their continued existence.

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

The Commission is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action. The proposal to modify the recreational RCG and lingcod season structure regulations to restore access to all depths in state waters north of Point Conception will restore fishing opportunities for anglers targeting groundfish similar to those in effect prior October 2023. No new fees are imposed as a result of these regulations, nor are any indirect costs imposed on anglers. No cost impacts are anticipated as a result of implementing a 2-fish sub-bag limit for canary rockfish and adding sunset rockfish to cryptic-species vermilion/sunset rockfish management unit.

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

The Commission anticipates no direct effect on the cost or savings to state agencies or the cost or savings in federal funding to the state in terms of implementation, monitoring, and enforcement activities for the Department; however, they could potentially affect annual license revenue if anglers previously stopped purchasing licenses as a result of depth

restrictions enacted in October 2023 and decide to purchase licenses after the proposed amendments become effective.

Estimating effort is difficult, as there is no groundfish-specific report card. A general California fishing license covers multiple species and is valid for 365 days regardless of when the license is purchased. It's unclear whether anglers ceased fishing altogether or shifted to other available species as a result of groundfish depth restrictions enacted in October 2023, since the groundfish depth restrictions coincided with closures to the recreational salmon fishery and new limitations in other fisheries, further complicating an impact analysis. Overall, any effect on license sales will likely be neutral or positive – if license sales go up by 0.1% as a result of these regulations, then the anticipated revenue increase would be approximately \$81,000, see the addendum to the economic and fiscal impact statement (STD 399).

- (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

## Updated 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).

Current regulations establish season dates and depth constraints, and recreational bag limits for federal groundfish species that vary by species or species groups and are designed to keep harvest within federally established allowable limits. Section 1.91 defines the species considered federal groundfish. Sections 27.25, 27.30, 27.35 and 27.40 currently set forth season dates, and depth constraints for the four groundfish management areas (GMA) north of Point Conception (34°27' N. lat.). Section 28.55, Rockfish (Genus *Sebastes*), currently sets forth the bag limits, and methods of take for all rockfish species.

### Proposed Changes

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) recommends that the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) use regular rulemaking authority to incorporate emergency regulations it adopted in August 2025 to amend the recreational rockfish, cabezon, and greenling (RCG) and lingcod season structure regulations. The amendments restored fishing access to all depths in state waters north of Point Conception from April 1 to December 31, implemented a 2-fish sub-bag limit for canary rockfish, and added sunset rockfish to cryptic-species vermilion/sunset rockfish management unit. The proposed regulations would amend sections 1.91, 27.25, 27.30, 27.35, 27.40, and 28.55, through a “certificate of compliance” action. The proposal is necessary for regulations in state waters (0 to 3 miles from shore) to be consistent and complementary with regulations in federal waters (3 to 200 miles from shore), to keep catches of canary rockfish and vermilion/sunset rockfish within federally established harvest limits, and for the benefit of the public’s general welfare.

On June 9, 2025, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) posted online a draft quillback rockfish stock assessment in waters off California, an assessment that is more robust than the previous one conducted in 2021. The newest assessment considers all available data sources, including newly available California-specific life history information. Results of the assessment indicate the California stock is healthy and not overfished as was indicated by the 2021 quillback rockfish stock assessment that was data-moderate. Therefore, the previous conservation emergency identified in 2021 no longer exists and the associated depth-based fishery constraints are unwarranted.

Following formal review and approval of the 2025 stock assessment for use in federal management, which occurred between July and September 2025, the National Marine Fisheries Service took an inseason federal regulatory action to remove the federal fishery depth restrictions in place since October 2023. The federal action, effective September 18, 2025, replaced the depths and season structure for boat-based RCG and lingcod fishing in federal waters (3 to 200 miles from shore) with all-depth fishing from the California/Oregon border (42° N. lat.) to Point Conception (34°27' N. lat.) during the open season in these GMAs, April 1 to December 31. **A second NMFS action, effective December 16, 2025, implemented a 2-fish sub-bag limit for canary rockfish within the 10-fish RCG daily limit.** Adopting through a regular rulemaking the regulatory amendments in the August 2025

emergency rulemaking will continue to restore recreational fishing opportunities to distribute recreational fishing efforts, consistent with the September 18, 2025 federal regulations.

It is important to have consistent and complementary state and federal regulations establishing harvest limits, season dates, depth constraints and other management measures. Inconsistency in state and federal rules hinders enforcement, increases angler confusion, and precludes a comprehensive approach to resource management.

### Benefits of the Proposed Regulations

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

Fishing is an outdoor activity that can provide several health and welfare benefits to California residents. Anglers and their families benefit from fresh fish to eat and from the benefits of outdoor recreation, including exercise. People who fish have a special connection with the outdoors and an awareness of the relationships between wildlife, habitat, and humans, and fishing can be a family tradition and a bonding activity.

### Consistency and Compatibility with Existing Regulations

The proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations. The California Legislature has delegated authority to the Commission to adopt recreational fishing regulations (California Fish and Game Code, sections 200 and 205). The proposed regulations are consistent with the Commission's regulations in Title 14, CCR. Commission staff has searched the California Code of Regulations and has found no other state regulations related to the recreational take of groundfish. **Commission staff has searched the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and, pursuant to California Government Code subdivision 11346.2(b)(6), has determined that the proposed regulations avoid unnecessary duplication and do not conflict with federal regulations contained in the CFR.**

### UPDATE

**At its February 11, 2026 meeting, the Commission adopted the regulations as originally proposed. A NMFS action, effective December 16, 2025, implemented a 2-fish sub-bag limit for canary rockfish within the 10-fish RCG daily limit. There have been no other changes in applicable laws or to the effect of the proposed regulations from the laws and effects described in the Notice of Proposed Action.**