Committee Staff Summary for November 12, 2026 MRC

9. Staff and Agency Updates

Today's Item **Information ☒** **Action ☐**

Receive updates from staff and other agencies, including the California Ocean Protection Council and the Department.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)

Background

This is a standing agenda item for staff and partner agencies to provide updates on marine-related activities. Members of the public may have an opportunity to share thoughts and questions, although the extent of discussion will be at the discretion of MRC co-chairs and subject to available time.

For today's meeting, written Department updates are provided on two MRC work plan topics, along with other written updates and a presentation from Department law enforcement staff.

(A) ***California Ocean Protection Council (OPC)***

Exhibit 1 provides OPC's written update.

(B) ***Department***

I. *Law Enforcement Division (LED)*

LED Marine Enforcement District staff will present key marine enforcement cases from 2026 (Exhibit 2).

II. *Marine Region*

Exhibit 3 provides written updates on:

a. Tidal invertebrates regulations
b. Box crab exploratory fishing EFP - Project outcomes

(C) ***Commission Staff***

The Commission has been matched with its California Sea Grant State Fellow for 2027; staff will share details about the new fellow at the December Commission meeting.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation (N/A)

Exhibits

1. OPC update, received November 5, 2026
2. LED presentation: Marine Enforcement Report, received October 28, 2026
3. Marine Region written update, received October 27, 2026

Motion (N/A)

CALIFORNIA
OCEAN
PROTECTION
COUNCIL

Wade Crowfoot | Secretary for Natural Resources | Council Chair
Yana Garcia | Secretary for Environmental Protection
Malia M. Cohen | State Controller
Ben Allen | State Senator
Dawn Addis | State Assemblymember
Alexis Jackson | Public Member
Megan Rocha | Public Member

Update to the Marine Resources Committee
November 12, 2026
Staff Lead: Katie Cieri, Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Program Manager

Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network Investments

In December, OPC will release a long-term investment framework for Marine Protected Area (MPA) monitoring that presents rationale, scope, and intended outcomes for the Ocean Protection Council's monitoring investments for the MPA network. It builds on, but does not replace or amend, the 2018 MPA Monitoring Action Plan. At the same time, OPC will release a MPA Community Science Strategy that identifies priorities for strengthening the role of community science in California's MPA Monitoring Program and informs the Framework's priorities related to participation, coordination, capacity building, and integration of community-generated information. These two documents, along with the Recommendations for Social Science Research and Monitoring of the California Marine Protected Area Network report, inform seven investments that OPC will consider at its December 8, 2026 quarterly meeting – the final OPC meeting of the Newsom Administration. Overall, these investments will sustain core monitoring capacity while addressing priority social and social-ecological information gaps, supporting innovative new monitoring tools and technologies, and broadening participation in monitoring. Together, they will provide complementary lines of evidence to support future MPA adaptive management decisions and preparation for the next Decadal Management Review in 2032.

El Niño Science Forum and Request for Proposals

In partnership with the California Ocean Science Trust, OPC has convened an El Niño Science Forum to serve as a venue for information exchange between coastal and marine researchers and state resource managers on how the 2026 El Niño is affecting California's coast and ocean. This forum is already proving to be an important venue for discussing monitoring priorities, research needs, and how state action can promote resilience to the El Niño.

At the last OPC Council Meeting on September 18, 2026, OPC approved $1 million for rapid response to protect coastal and marine ecosystems during a marine heatwave and El Niño. OPC released a Request for Proposals on October 26th. Proposals were due on Friday, November 6th. However, additional proposals will be considered through Friday, November 13th. Projects are anticipated to begin as early as December 2026 - January 2027.

Additionally, State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) is considering contributing an additional $1 million in funding to support projects through this solicitation, pending approval at its December 3, 2026, Board meeting. SCC will consider the full range of activities eligible under this solicitation, with funding decisions informed by SCC's Project Selection Criteria and a prioritized focus on evaluating the performance of shorelines restored using nature-based solutions for sea level rise adaptation compared to similar armored or degraded shorelines, particularly in San Francisco Bay and Southern California, where coastal impacts associated with El Niño are already occurring.

For more information on the 2026 El Niño and how OPC is responding, please see OPC's information page and resource hub: https://opc.ca.gov/marine-heat-wave-el-nino-hub/.

Kelp Forest and Marine Species Recovery Investments

At the December OPC meeting, staff will recommend the disbursement of funds to support the recovery of kelp forest ecosystems statewide via a competitive solicitation supported by California Sea Grant, as well as a suite of projects to bolster California's marine biodiversity. OPC's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan establishes a target of restoring 2000 acres of kelp forests by 2030; the competitive solicitation will advance progress towards that target during the final development phase of the Kelp Restoration and Management Plan (KRMP). To further advance OPC's strategic priorities, staff will also recommend projects that support the recovery of sea palm, a "species of greatest conservation need" and critically endangered sunflower sea stars, as well as a deeper understanding of the impacts of marine heatwaves and El Niño on bull kelp ecosystems in northern California.

United Nations Biodiversity Summit (COP 17)

In October, OPC leadership accompanied California Secretary for Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot to Yerevan, Armenia for the United Nations Biodiversity Summit (COP 17). These biodiversity COPs parallel the better-known climate COPs and are important opportunities to advance biodiversity protection worldwide. At COP, California representatives participated in the 9th Summit for Cities and Subnational Governments, which focused on elevating the role of cities, states, and provinces in achieving global nature protection and restoration goals. Representatives also met with key subnational government partners to discuss 30x30 implementation, supporting biodiversity action led by indigenous peoples and local communities, and increasing synergies between biodiversity and climate goals. California's leadership on MPAs and kelp restoration was specifically highlighted at events led by NGO partners.

Climate-Ready Fisheries Strategy (Strategy)

As discussed in item 3 of today's agenda, OPC staff are leading the development of a Climate-Ready Fisheries Strategy (Strategy), in collaboration with CDFW and CFGC. The Strategy is intended to strengthen the climate resilience of California's marine fisheries, and ensure management efforts continue to be proactive, flexible, and responsive in the face of climate change. The Strategy will provide top priorities for management action, research, monitoring, and strategic investment of Proposition 4 and other funds, related to climate-ready marine fisheries. It will guide engagement with California Native American tribes, interagency action, and coordination with academic institutions, conservation organizations, and fishing communities. The Strategy will build upon the foundation established by the 2018 Marine Life Management Act Master Plan for Fisheries, particularly Chapter 11: Adapting to Climate Change as well as other guiding documents including the 2026-2030 OPC Strategic Plan, the CFGC's Coastal Fishing Communities Policy, and the California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future. The Strategy will detail actions to advance four priorities: 1. manage for increased ecological and stock resilience; 2: build socioeconomic resilience; 3. expand implementation of adaptive management; 4. modernize and improve data systems.

OPC invited early consultation with California Native American tribes on the Strategy from June to August. OPC staff held a workshop with fishing and conservation community partners in September to inform the development of the draft Strategy. OPC invited consultation with tribes on the draft Strategy in late October. OPC staff are hosting two additional workshops with fishing and conservation community partners to inform the development of the draft Strategy later this November. OPC staff anticipate releasing the draft Strategy in mid-December, followed by a 30-day public comment period. Tribal consultation and public comment are expected to conclude in January. OPC staff anticipate bringing the final Strategy for consideration of adoption at the OPC Council meeting on March 16, 2027.

Statewide Marine Aquaculture Action Plan (Action Plan) Implementation

Since the adoption of the Statewide Marine Aquaculture Action Plan (Action Plan) in June 2026, OPC staff have worked with agency and external partners to begin implementation. Beginning this winter, California Sea Grant will lead the development of the Aquaculture Science Plan (Action 3.2) and conduct a landscape analysis of potential pathways and barriers to implementing pilot-scale aquaculture (Action 3.3). Sea Grant will convene a science panel to develop the Science Plan, which will be informed by state and federal agencies, California Native American tribes, the industry, and conservation organizations. The Science Plan will summarize best available ecological and socioeconomic science and identify additional science needs to inform aquaculture governance in California.

OPC staff have also been collaborating with state and federal agency partners to map out next steps to develop a consolidated aquaculture permit application process and portal (Action 1.4). Many of these topics were discussed at the Aquaculture Development Committee meeting on November 9th. In August, OPC invited consultation with tribes on the implementation of Action 3.4: Work in partnership with tribes to identify barriers and vision opportunities for the sustainable development of tribal-led marine aquaculture. That consultation period will conclude later this week.

December OPC Council Meeting

OPC's next Council Meeting will be held on December 8, 2026. Participants are welcome to attend in-person at the California Natural Resources Agency Headquarters Auditorium or via Zoom. The agenda and meeting materials will be available on November 24th.

Topics for the December Council Meeting include:

- Marking OPC's milestones over the last 8 years of the Newsom Administration
- Updates on the El Nino Forum and Rapid Response RFP
- Senate Bill 1 sea level rise resilience funding
- Funding to advance tribal stewardship of the coast and ocean
- New investments in MPA monitoring and kelp restoration

CDFW Marine Enforcement Report MRC November 2026

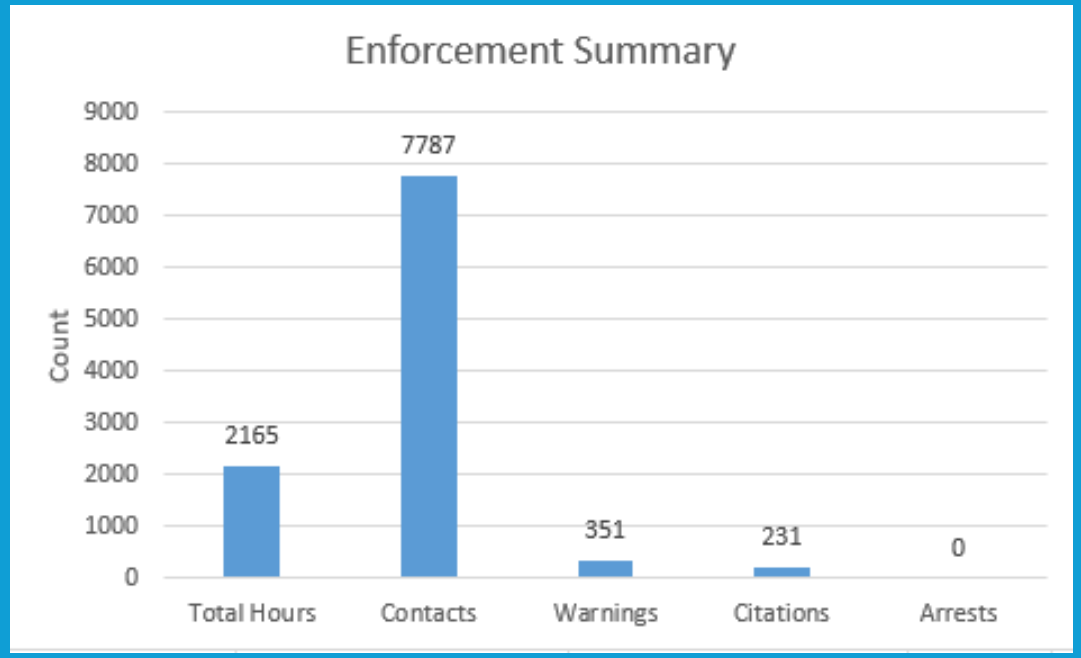
Captain Daniel Lengning

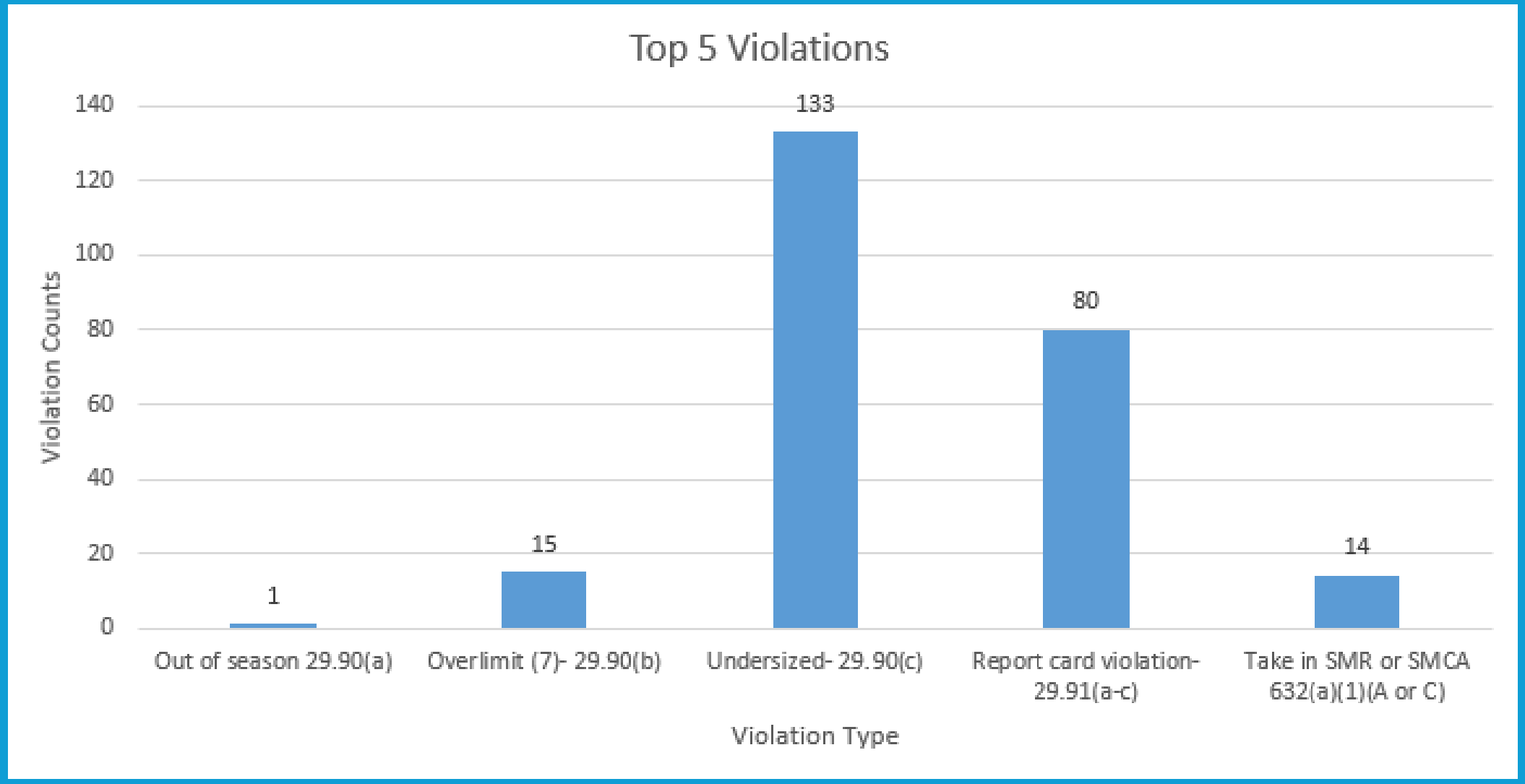
Marine Enforcement District

2026 Spiny Lobster Opener Enforcement Summary

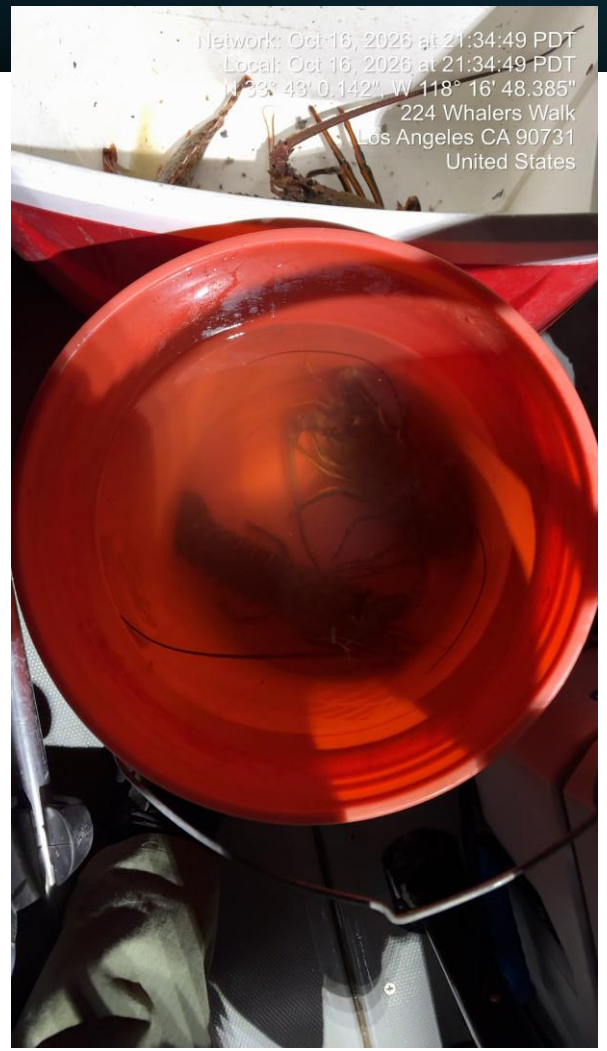
Patrol effort from PAL

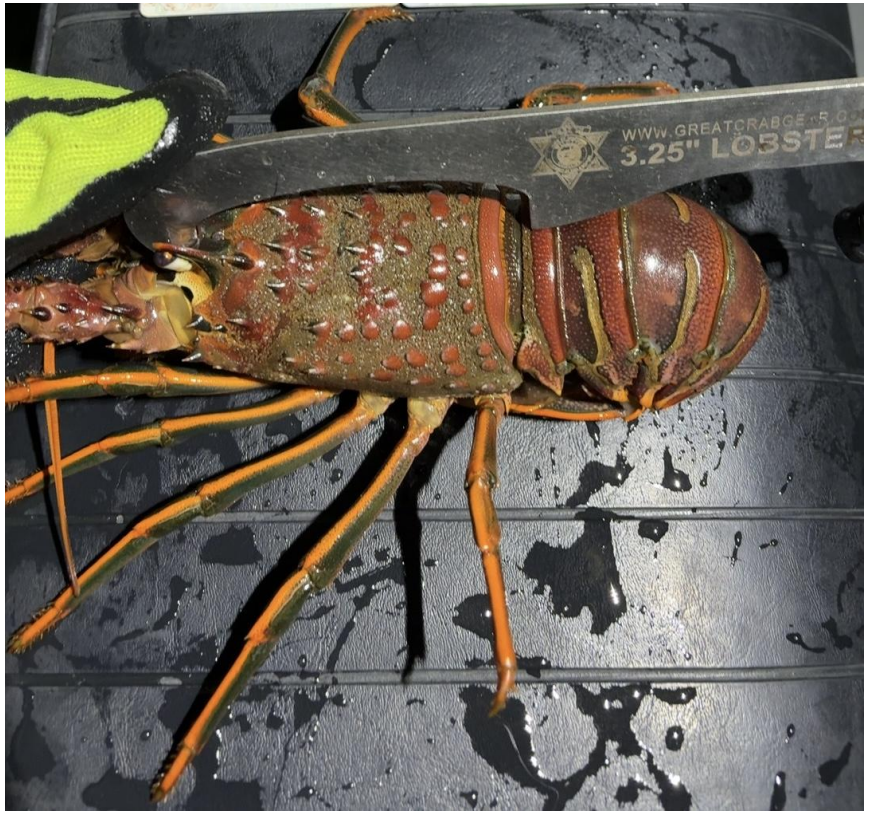
- Number of Contributing Officers – 63
- Total Patrol Hours – 2,165
- Contacts – 7,787
- Warnings Given – 351
- Citations Issued on Patrol – 231
- Arrests - 0




Top 5 Violations
Violation Counts
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
1
15
133
80
14
Out of season 29.90(a)
Overlimit (7)- 29.90(b)
Undersized- 29.90(c)
Report card violation- 29.91(a-c)
Take in SMR or SMCA 632(a)(1)(A or C)
Violation Type

Luck Ran Out
Patrol Boat Coho Case













Humboldt County Dungeness Crab Traps











Thank You Assistant Chief Kord!

Fair winds, following seas, and perfect waves!

California Fish and Game Commission
Marine Resources Committee Meeting
November 12, 2026

California Department of Fish and Wildlife – Marine Region Written Update

Tidepool Invertebrate Regulations

Background

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Invertebrate Management Project is leading a comprehensive overhaul of tidal invertebrate regulations to address increased public interest in harvesting, outdated regulatory language, and enforcement challenges. CDFW has conducted harvester surveys along the coast and is working with researchers to gather biological and social-science data to inform regulatory revisions. This modernization effort is intended to ensure the long-term sustainability of California's tidepool ecosystems, improve regulatory clarity, strengthen protections for vulnerable species, and support sustainable harvesting opportunities.

The current tidepool regulatory framework relies on a complicated spatial definition requiring measurement of tide lines and a 1,000-foot seaward boundary. This approach is unclear, impractical, and inconsistently interpreted. The bag limit for many invertebrate species defaults to the general allowance of 35 individuals per species per day, which is ecologically inappropriate for several taxa and does not provide sufficient protection for sensitive species. CDFW is evaluating species-specific limits for all tidepool-associated invertebrates as part of this overhaul.

Goals of the Regulation Overhaul

- Remove Tidepool Definition- Remove the spatial definition of a tidepool and manage each species regardless of where it is in the ocean.
- **General Prohibition for Non-Specified Invertebrates** – Establish a regulatory structure where only invertebrates explicitly listed may be taken, providing broad protection for all others.
- **Species-Specific Protections** – Update or add size limits, take limits, or seasonal measures for vulnerable, depleted, or biologically sensitive species.
- **Generalized Species Groups with Individual Species Limits** – Define broader invertebrate categories with standardized general limits and stricter sub-limits for sensitive species.

- **Gear and Tool Regulation Updates** – Modernize gear provisions including SCUBA use, hand tool definitions, container requirements, and whole-animal rules for shore-collected organisms.

Next Steps

1. Tribal outreach: 2026–2028
2. Identification of affected communities: Ongoing
3. Additional MRC discussions: 2027–2028
4. Fish and Game Commission (FGC) regulatory process: 2028–2029

Box Crab Experimental Fishery

Exploratory Fishing Permit (EFP) #2023-01 is approaching the end of its third year in January 2027. This is the second EFP focused on exploratory fishing for brown box crab (*Echinocerus* (formerly *Lopholithodes*) *foraminatus*). The first permit (2019-2023) was developed to collect Essential Fishery Information (EFI) and evaluate the potential for a commercial fishery for box crab and its design elements. The current permit, which is held by Sustainable Seas Technology (SST), aims to fill information gaps while testing the feasibility of using on-demand pop-up fishing systems with strings of trap gear to address whale entanglement risk in this deep-water (300 – 1,000 feet) fishery.

Major amendments were made to the SST permit in October 2024 and February 2026. The first amendment extended the maximum trap service interval from 96 hours (4 days) to 168 hours (7 days). The scope of the permit was then significantly expanded through the second amendment: fishing area extended from Southern California to statewide, permit capacity increased from 5 to 20 authorized vessels, gear allowance increased from 75 to 200 traps per authorized agent, total allowable catch for box crab nearly tripled to 500,000 pounds per year, and two new king crab species were added (*Paralithodes rathbuni* and *Lithodes couesi*) in addition to California king crab (*P. californiensis*), which was already approved for retention.

Since fishing began in January 2024, turnover of authorized agents has been high and overall participation has been low. Seven authorized agents and the EFP holder have fished the permit, landing 44,775 pounds of box crab and 6,083 pounds of California king crab through September 2026. Currently, just one vessel is active in Southern California (fishing about 30 traps), and only one has fished in northern California (fishing the full 200 trap allotment) thus far. Three on-demand fishing systems have been tested from manufacturers Sub Sea Sonics, Ropeless Systems, and Desert Star, paired with line

management systems by Guardian Ropeless or fisher-designed sleds. Participants have demonstrated strong success with on-demand gear, and results are being used to refine and improve the reliability of these systems at depth.

Essential Fishery Information is being generated through catch-sampling, electronic monitoring, fishermen logbooks and landing records, and a tag-recapture study. In conjunction with results from the prior EFP, this information is being used to evaluate the viability of a new, sustainable fishery and its design elements. Although more data are still needed from northern California, data from Southern California are sufficient to inform some management measures such as size limits, fishing seasons, depths, and gear specifications. Thus, further exploration of a commercial fishery in Southern California could be considered. However, some challenges to fishery authorization have been identified, including statutes in Fish and Game Code (FGC) which unless modified would not allow a future fishery to be prosecuted consistent with EFP testing conditions (e.g., longer service intervals than the 96-hour maximum required by FGC Section 9004). In addition, the minimal participation in this EFP to date may signal a lack of strong demand for this fishery.

At the California Fish and Game Commission's March 2027 Marine Resources Committee meeting, the Department is scheduled to provide more details about the preliminary results of the box crab EFPs and how they pertain directly to elements of a fishery, discuss the opportunities and challenges to fishery authorization, and next steps. With the final year of the EFP approaching, there is interest in a third EFP to bridge the gap between the end of this EFP and potential fishery authorization. This would allow time for EFI from northern California to be generated, solutions for challenges to fishery authorization to be explored, opportunity to increase participation with adjustments to data collection requirements, and potential management measures such as size limits, seasons, depths, and gear specifications to be tested in Southern California.