

Notice of Intent to Adopt Negative Declaration

Lead Agency: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Document Title

Proposed Amendments to Commercial Groundfish regulations, Rescinding of Select Commercial Groundfish Management Measures, Title 14, Sections 150.06 & 150.16, California Code of Regulations

Implementation Project Location(s):

California State Waters from the California/Oregon Border to 37° 07' N latitude (Año Nuevo).

Project Description

Regulatory authority for the commercial groundfish fisheries is shared by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) and federal government, 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 and California groundfish recreational and commercial fisheries, on a sustainable basis. State regulations vary by species/groups and groundfish management area, and are designed to keep harvests within federally-established limits. One of the groundfish species, quillback rockfish (*Sebastes maliger*), has driven extensive 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. The Department adopted emergency regulations that defined the 20-fathom boundary line, and established the commercial California Groundfish Restriction Area (CGRA) and put those in place long-term in early 2025.

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.

In response to the draft quillback rockfish stock assessment, the Department adopted emergency regulations which rescinded the CGRA and associated 20-fathom boundary line for commercial groundfish fisheries north of 37° 07' N latitude (Año Nuevo) put in place in early 2025 as a result of the 2021 stock assessment and became effective on August 21, 2025. The emergency rulemaking also extended federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish stocks into state waters north of 37° 07' N latitude.

For this Project, the Department proposes to amend commercial groundfish fishing regulations as set forth in Sections 150.06 and 150.16 of Title 14 of the California

Code of Regulations through a certificate of compliance action to make permanent these emergency regulations currently in place, including:

1. rescind the CGRA and associated 20-fathom boundary line north of 37° 07' N latitude (Año Nuevo, San Mateo County); and,
2. extend federal trip limits for non-nearshore groundfish stocks into state waters.

Document Availability

The negative declaration can be accessed online at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Notices/Regulations/commercial-groundfish-2025>. It is also available for review upon request at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Monterey - Office, located at 20 Lower Ragsdale Dr Suite #100, Monterey, CA 93940.

Review Period Timeframe

January 30, 2026 through March 16, 2026

Contact Information

Comments on the subject environmental documents may be submitted by email to groundfish@wildlife.ca.gov or via regular mail to

Mailing address

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