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Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery

Plain Language Compliance Guide for
Amendment 30 and the 2023-24 Harvest
Specifications and Commercial and
Recreational Management Measures

December 2022

This document serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

The final rule implementing Amendment 30 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (PCGFMP) and the 2023-24 Pacific Coast Groundfish Biennial Harvest Specifications and Management Measures published on December 16, 2022 ([87 FR 77007](#)).

Regulations contained in this rule are effective **January 1, 2023**.

To learn more about Amendment 30 or the 2023-24 harvest specifications and management measures visit our website at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/amendment-30-pacific-coast-groundfish-fishery-management-plan-2023-2024-harvest>



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For general groundfish questions, please call the Groundfish Branch at 206-526-6140.

For questions about groundfish permits, please call the Permits Branch at 206-526-4353.

For questions about declarations, please call the West Coast Groundfish Declaration Line at 888-585-5518

Additional details on the changes in this final rule are described in the [Proposed Rule](#) for this action (87 FR 62676, October 14, 2022).



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1. Overview of Harvest Specifications

Q: What are the changes to harvest specifications that triggered management measure changes?

A: There were new stock assessments in 2021 that changed our understanding of population health and necessitated measures that would or could (if needed) reduce catch of those species. Those species and measures are summarized below:

Species	Management measure(s)
<p><u>Spiny dogfish</u> - the population is not as large as previously thought and quotas are decreasing from 2022.</p>	<p>Block Area Closures added as an available management tool in the bottom trawl and midwater trawl fisheries. See also 3a.</p>
<p><u>Quillback rockfish</u> and <u>copper rockfish</u> - harvest of these species in recent years has been higher than is sustainable and quotas are decreasing from 2022. Localized depletion occurring off California.</p>	<p>Annual Catch Targets for each species off the coast of California are established. Some commercial non-trawl and recreational fisheries management measures are more restrictive. Creation of “offshore only” recreational fishery off California with reduced fishing time in nearshore waters for each management area by 30 percent or more. See also 3c and 4a.</p>

1. Overview of Harvest Specifications

Q: For which species is the harvest policy that calculates Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) changing?

A: Two species have new harvest policies that will increase ACLs from what they would otherwise have been, as summarized in the table below and described in the [Proposed Rule](#) (87 FR 62676, October 14, 2022).

Summary

Black Rockfish off the coast of Oregon -

The ACL would have been 477 mt in 2023 and 471 mt in 2024; instead, the ACL (which contributes to the Black/Blue/Deacon Complex ACL) for Oregon black rockfish is 512 mt in both 2023 and 2024.

Quillback Rockfish off the coast of California -

The ACL would have been 0.11 mt in 2023 and 0.42 mt in 2024; instead the ACL (which contributes to the Nearshore Rockfish Complex South) for California quillback rockfish is 1.76 mt in 2023 and 1.93 mt in 2024.

General Management Measure Changes



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2. General Management Measure Changes

Because all sources of mortality must count against ACLs, some deductions are taken “**off-the-top**” prior to allocations among the various groundfish sectors.

- Set-asides for Pacific Coast Tribes remain largely the same as previous years, with the exception of Pacific ocean perch and darkblotched rockfish.
- Set-asides for Exempted Fishing Permits are similar to recent years, with renewals of five EFPs for 2023 and 2024.

Details of these set-asides and descriptions of the EFPs can be found in the [Proposed rule](#) (87 FR 62676, October 14, 2022).



2. General Management Measure Changes

Q: Which species have changes to allocations with this rule compared to the allocations in 2021-22?

A: Cowcod, Lingcod South, Longnose skate, Shelf Rockfish Complex, Slope Rockfish Complex, Petrale sole, and Widow rockfish have different allocations from the prior two-year allocations to accommodate sector-specific harvest in 2023-24. Other species with two-year allocations are unchanged from 2021-22.

Details of all the two-year allocations, including % splits and associated metric tonnes can be found in [Table 1b](#) to part 660, subpart C.



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2. General Management Measure Changes

Q: Do I need to download and plot new latitude and longitude coordinates that define depth-based closed areas where I fish?

A: If you fish off the coasts of Washington and Oregon, no, because no depth-based lines have been revised by this action in those areas.

If you fish off the coast of California, yes, because latitude and longitude points defining lines (that approximate depth contours) have been revised in multiple places off the coast of California.

Visit <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/sustainable-fisheries/west-coast-groundfish-closed-areas>

Scroll down to the sub-heading “Defining depth based boundary lines” and download the file.



Commercial Management Measure Changes by Sector



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3. Commercial management measures - a. Limited Entry Trawl, including Individual Fishing Quota

- The incidental **trip limits for non-IFQ species** that apply to vessels fishing IFQ are not revised in 2023-24 from what they were in 2022. Trip limits for the IFQ fishery can be found in [Table 1 North](#) and [Table 1 South](#) to part 660, subpart D.
- This final rule expands the potential use of **Block Area Closures (BACs)**, size-variable spatial closures already available for salmon bycatch mitigation, to be used in non-tribal midwater trawl and bottom trawl fisheries to reduce incidental catch of groundfish species. This rule does not implement any BACs at this time, and future BACs will be announced in the *Federal Register*. Additional information can be found in the [Proposed rule](#) (87 FR 62676, October 14, 2022).



3. Commercial management measures - b. Limited Entry Fixed Gear Sablefish

Q: What are the 2023 and 2024 sablefish tier limits associated with my sablefish-endorsed limited entry permit?

A: In 2023, the following annual limits are in effect: Tier 1 at 72,904 lb (33,069 kg), Tier 2 at 33,138 lb (15,031 kg), and Tier 3 at 18,936 lb (8,589 kg).

In 2024 and beyond, the following annual limits are in effect: Tier 1 at 66,805 lb (30,302 kg), Tier 2 at 30,366 lb (13,774 kg), and Tier 3 at 17,352 lb (7,871 kg).



3. Commercial management measures - b. Limited Entry Fixed Gear Sablefish cont'd.

Q: Are the sablefish primary season dates changing?

A: Yes. This final rule permanently extends the limited entry fixed gear sablefish primary tier fishery season end date from October 31 to December 31. Starting in 2023, the primary season begins at 12 noon local time on April 1 and closes at 12 noon local time on December 31 each year.

Q: Is anything changing how I finish my tier and transition to the trip limit fishery?

A: No. The transition from tier limits to trip limits will continue to happen automatically once your tier limits are landed. Once your entire tier limit(s) are landed, those without an owner on board exemption are no longer required to have the owner on board even though the primary season dates are extended through December 31.



3. Commercial management measures - b. Limited Entry Fixed Gear Sablefish, cont'd.

Q: I fish trip limits with my sablefish endorsed limited entry permit. Has anything changed with that?

A: Yes, but only indirectly. Because the primary season now extends through December 31, there will be no trip limits available to you after noon on April 1 through the end of the year (rather than through October 31) until the entire tier limit associated with your permit has been landed, with the owner on board (unless exempted) during those tier limit landings.

Q: Are any fish ticket reporting or owner on board requirements changing?

A: No.



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3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl

Q: What are the trip limits for sablefish?

A: The scheduled trip limits are shown below, but may change inseason based on ongoing fishery information. This rule removed the open access daily trip limit for sablefish north of 36° N. lat. and maintained the same weekly and bimonthly trip limits as were in place in the start of 2022 for both sablefish north and south of 36° N. lat.

Sector	Area	2023 Schedule* (January-December)
Limited entry	North of 36° N. lat.	2,400 lb /week; not to exceed 4,800 lb. per 2 months
Limited entry	South of 36° N. lat.	2,500 lb /week
Open Access	North of 36° N. lat.	2,000 lb /week; not to exceed 4,000 lb. per 2 months
Open Access	South of 36° N. lat.	2,000 lb /week; not to exceed 4,000 lb. per 2 months

* May change through inseason action; changes will be announced in the *Federal Register*



3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl , cont'd.

Q: What are the trip limits for sablefish?

A: The scheduled trip limits are shown below, but may change inseason based on ongoing fishery information. This rule removed the open access daily trip limit for sablefish north of 36° N. lat. and maintained the same weekly and bimonthly trip limits as were in place in the start of 2022 for both sablefish north and south of 36° N. lat.

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Open Access	South of 36° N. lat.	2,000 lb /week; not to exceed 4,000 lb bi-monthly

* May change through inseason action; changes will be announced in the *Federal Register*



3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl, cont'd.

Q: Are there any changes to the incidental halibut retention allowance for the primary sablefish fishery?

A: Yes. North of Point Chehalis, WA, the incidental halibut retention allowance has been extended from October 31 to the date/time specified by the [International Pacific Halibut Commission](#) annually for the closure of commercial Pacific halibut fisheries coastwide.



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3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl, cont'd.

Q:What are the trip limits for other groundfish species?

A: Most trip limits for other groundfish species are unchanged from 2022. For limited entry fixed gear, they can be found in [Table 2 \(North\)](#) and [Table 2 \(South\)](#) to subpart E. For open access, they can be found at [Table 3 \(North\)](#) and [Table 3 \(South\)](#) to subpart F.



3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl, cont'd.

Q: Is any fishing allowed in the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA)?

A: Yes. Fishing with hook and line gear for Other Flatfish continues to be allowed in the RCA. Beginning in 2023, fishing* for most groundfish species with specific types of hook and line gear in the non-trawl RCA will be allowed from 46° 16' N. lat. to the U.S./Mexico border. Only non-bottom contact vertical jig gear and groundfish troll configurations are allowed. All other gears are prohibited within the non-trawl RCA.

REMINDER: Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements continue to apply when fishing in the non-trawl RCA.

*Non-trawl RCA provisions for OA apply only to the directed open access fishery.



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3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl, cont'd.

Q: What do I need to do before I leave port on a trip where I plan to fish non-bottom contact hook and line gear in the non-trawl RCA?

A: The two new things you should do before leaving port are: (1) make a declaration of “Open access non-bottom contact stationary vertical jig gear” or “Open access non-bottom contact troll gear”; and (2) remove all prohibited fishing gear (e.g. longline and/or pot/trap) from your vessel.

NOTE: If your vessel is registered to a limited entry permit and you fish with this type of open access gear in the non-trawl RCA, you are subject to the usual crossover provisions (found at [660.60\(h\)\(7\)](#)). For example, you will be subject to the lowest applicable trip limits for the period.



3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl, cont'd.

Q: What is legal “stationary vertical jig gear”?

A: Legal “stationary vertical jig gear” is a type of non-bottom contact hook-and-line gear allowed in the non-trawl RCA. The gear is attached to the vessel and not anchored to the bottom and is subject to the following specifications:

Stationary vertical jig gear:

1. must be a minimum of 50 feet between the bottom weight and the lowest fishing hook;
2. no more than 4 vertical mainlines may be used at one time with no more than 25 hooks on each mainline, and;
3. no more than 100 hooks may be in the water at one time, with no more than 25 extra hooks on board the vessel.



3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl, cont'd.

Q: What is legal “groundfish troll gear”?

A: Legal “groundfish troll gear*” allowed in the non-trawl RCA is subject to the following specifications:

Groundfish troll gear:

1. must be a minimum of 50 feet between the bottom weight and the troll wire’s connection to the horizontal mainline;
2. no more than 1 mainline may be used at one time; and
3. no more than 500 hooks may be in the water at one time, with no more than 25 extra hooks on board the vessel; hooks must be spaced apart by a visible marker (e.g., floats, line wraps, colored lines splices), with no more than 25 hooks between each marker and no more than 20 markers on the mainline.

*Groundfish troll gear does not trigger streamerline requirements at 660.21



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3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl, cont'd.

Q: Can I fish inside and outside of the non-trawl RCA on the same trip?

A: Vessels may fish inside and outside the non-trawl RCA on the same trip, but can only carry one type of legal non-bottom contact hook-and-line gear on-board the vessel when fishing occurs in the NT-RCA.

Q: Can I use natural bait or weighted hooks in the non-trawl RCA?

A: No. No natural bait or weighted hooks can be used nor be on board the vessel. Only artificial lures and flies are allowed.



3. Commercial management measures - c. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access Non-trawl, cont'd.

Q: Can I fish limited entry trip limits with non-bottom contact hook and line gear in the non-trawl RCA?

A: No, because the allowable gears in the non-trawl RCA are not the gears endorsed for your limited entry permit (e.g. longline or pot/trap). If you legally fish in the non-trawl RCA with the allowable gears, you would be using “open access gear” and would therefore be subject to open access trip limits. These gear-use cross-over rules are unchanged from prior years.



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Recreational Management Measure Changes by State



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4. Recreational management measures - a. California

Q: Are the season and area closures different from 2021-2022?

A: Yes. In order to limit incidental catch of overfished stocks and stocks of concern while providing as much recreational fishing opportunity as possible in each management area, season structure for 2023 and 2024 is a substantial departure from 2021 and 2022.

In order to reduce total mortality of quillback rockfish and copper rockfish, each management area will incur a reduction in fishing time in nearshore waters of 30 percent or more. This, in combination with the novel utilization of the RCA, would create an “offshore only fishery” during certain months.



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4. Recreational management measures - a. California, cont'd.

Q: What is changing to the previously established RCA boundary lines for the California recreational fishery?

A: In addition to allowing fishing shoreward of a specific RCA boundary line and prohibiting fishing seaward of that line (current RCA utilization), [Amendment 30](#) modifies the Pacific Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (PCGFMP) to also allow fishing seaward of a specified RCA boundary line and prohibit fishing shoreward of that line (novel RCA utilization).

Q: When will this new management measure be used?

A: Novel RCA utilization may be implemented during regular season setting process through biennial specifications and management measures or as an inseason action.



4. Recreational management measures - a. California, cont'd.

Q: What are the expected seasons and depth restrictions by management area for the 2023-24 in the California RCG complex and lingcod fisheries?

A: In general, the recreational season structure in all areas is closed in winter and early spring with Southern area opening earliest (April 1) and the Northern, Mendocino, and San Francisco areas opening May 15*. All areas except Northern are scheduled to be open until December 31. Northern recreational fisheries season ends October 15.

Recreational depth restrictions prohibit RCG and lingcod fishing shoreward of the 50 fm line** seasonally. Mendocino and San Francisco areas and have this depth restriction from May 15 through July 15. This depth restriction applies in the Central and Southern areas in the fall and early winter.

*earlier versions of this guide mistakenly cited May1 as the opening date

**may be revised inseason as announced in the *Federal Register*



4. Recreational management measures - a. California, cont'd.

The recreational seasons and allowable fishing areas are shown in the info graphic below: (“>” symbol means “greater than” or “seaward of” the boundary line):

Management Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Northern (42° N. lat. to 40°10' N. lat.)	CLOSED				May 15-October 15 All Depths					CLOSED		
Mendocino (40°10' N. lat. to 38°57.50' N. lat.)	CLOSED				May 15- July 15 >50 fm (91 m)		July 16-December 31 All Depths					
San Francisco (38°57.50' N. lat. to 37°11' N. lat.)	CLOSED				May 15- July 15 >50 fm (91 m)		July 16-December 31 All Depths					
Central (37°11' N. lat. to 34°27' N. lat.)	CLOSED				May 1-September 30 All Depths					October 1- December 31 >50 fm		
Southern (South of 34°27' N. lat.)	CLOSED			April 1-September 15 All Depths					September 16- December 31 >50 fm			



4. Recreational management measures - a. California, cont'd.

Q: Are there any prohibitions in times and areas where an RCA is “>” or closed seaward of an RCA line (*i.e.*, when an “off-shore only” fishery is active in that management area)?

A: Yes: (1) you cannot retain or possess nearshore rockfish, cabezon, and greenlings in any depths of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) throughout the management area; (2) you cannot retain or possess any species of rockfish, cabezon, greenlings, and lingcod is prohibited shoreward of the RCA boundary line within the EEZ, except that vessels may transit through waters shoreward of the RCA line with no fishing gear in the water.



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4. Recreational management measures - a. California, cont'd.

Q: What species are not included in the rockfish, cabezon, and greenling (RCG) complex?

A: California scorpionfish and sablefish are not part of the RCG Complex and are open year round at all depths.



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4. Recreational management measures - a. California, cont'd.

Q: Are there any differences between previous size limits and bag limits of any stocks?

A: No. Size limits and bag limits will remain the same as 2022 for all stocks. Additionally, sub-bag limits of one quillback rockfish, one copper rockfish, and four vermilion rockfish within the 10-fish RCG daily bag and possession limit will remain the same.

NOTE: Further changes to the sub-bag limit or to prohibit retention may be recommended by the Council inseason, as necessary, to limit mortality and achieve specifications.

The most up to date bag limits for the California recreational fishery are available on the CDFW website. www.wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Ocean/Regulations/Groundfish-Summary



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4. Recreational management measures -

b. Oregon

Q: What is the new season structures, depth restrictions and bag limits for the Oregon bottom fish recreational fishery?

A: The Oregon recreational fishery is open at all depths to start the 2023 fishing year. Oregon long-leader gear fishing and “all-depth” Pacific halibut fishing and aggregate bag limits are summarized below:

Beginning in 2023, longleader fishing and “all-depth” Pacific halibut fishing will be allowed on the same trip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 Lingcod per day, lingcod minimum size of 22 inches (56 cm)• 25 flatfish per day, excluding Pacific halibut• Marine fish bag limit of 10 fish per day, cabezon minimum size limit of 16 inches (41 cm)
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The most up to date season structures, depth restrictions and bag limits for the Oregon recreational fishery are available on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife website: www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/finfish/groundfish_sport/index.asp



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4. Recreational management measures - c. Washington

Q: Are there any significant changes to the Washington recreational fishery?

A: Yes. The retention of copper rockfish, quillback rockfish, and vermilion rockfish during the months of May, June, and July will be prohibited.

Q: Are there any changes to recreational fishing within the Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA)?

A: No. Recreational fishing for groundfish and Pacific halibut is prohibited inside the North Coast Recreational YRCA.

NOTE: Recreational fishing for groundfish and P. halibut is allowed inside the South Coast Recreational YRCA and the Westport Offshore YRCA.



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4. Recreational management measures - c. Washington

Washington recreational fisheries for groundfish are closed during winter and subject to depth restrictions that differ by management area when the season is open. A summary of the season structure and catch limits are below:

	January-February	March-October	November - December
Groundfish	Closed	9 fish/day, with sublimits for rockfish, lingcod, flatfish and cabezon	Closed
Flatfish	Closed	5 fish/day, in addition to the groundfish limit	Closed
Lingcod, All marine areas	Closed	2 fish/day, within groundfish bag limit	Closed
Rockfish	Closed	7 fish/day, within groundfish bag limit	Closed
Cabezon, All marine areas	Closed	1 fish/day, within groundfish bag limit	Closed

Complete details on season structures, depth restrictions and bag limits for the Washington recreational fishery are available on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife website: wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/creel/halibut/



Administrative Changes - Miscellaneous Amendment 30 Provisions



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5. Administrative Changes with little or no on-the-water effects

a. Miscellaneous Amendment 30 provisions

- (1) Shortbelly rockfish was designated as an ecosystem component (EC) species through Amendment 29 to the PCGFMP, as part of the 2021-2022 groundfish management measure process ([85 FR 79880](#), December 11, 2020). Due to concerns raised during the 2021-2022 groundfish management measure process over the potential future development of a directed fishery, [Amendment 30](#) amends the PCGFMP to add language stating that if shortbelly rockfish mortalities exceed, or are projected to exceed 2,000 mt in a calendar year, the Council would review relevant fishery information and consider if management changes were warranted, including, but not limited to reconsideration of its current classification as an EC species.
- (2) To estimate mortality and provide for catch accounting, this final rule adds a sorting requirement for shortbelly rockfish in the LEFG and OA fisheries. The trawl sector is already subject to a sorting requirement for shortbelly rockfish.



5. Administrative Changes with little or no on-the-water effects

a. Miscellaneous Amendment 30 provisions (cont'd)

- (3) In the PCGFMP, the definition of Block Area Closures (BACs) was amended to align it with current authorized uses of these area closures. The PCGFMP is revised to include language that BACs are available in the EEZ seaward of Washington, Oregon and California state waters for vessels using limited entry bottom trawl gear and in the EEZ seaward of Washington, Oregon and California state waters for vessels using midwater trawl gear. Updates are consistent with Council intent described in the salmon bycatch mitigation rulemaking document (86 FR 10857, February 23, 2021).

