

It's Official... Ocean Fishing Will Resume

April 10, 2024



There will be a groundfish season in 2024. Effective immediately, CDFW announced the saltwater season will begin in April. The exact date will be determined this week by the State Office of Administrative Law, a formality to ensure legal compliance.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), last Thursday, followed all recommendations of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC). Thanks to the efforts of local fisherman at recent PFMC meetings, there will be a fishing season. Local anglers joined the Board of Supervisors and the Crescent City Council in questioning the lack of Hook and Line data by National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) scientists in its survey protocol and decision to recommend the closure of the 2023 Groundfish season, declaring several quillback species as endangered.

Acknowledging its lack of valid quillback data combined with the subsequent visit to Del Norte by six NOAA scientists, the PFMC recommended the season open with regulations on bag limits and depth adherence, effective with the April opening.

Last August, CDFW abruptly canceled the season due to exceeding Federal catch limits on quillback rockfish, a now federally-declared overfished species. The goal of CDFW encourages anglers to avoid quillback in the primary depth range between 20- 50 fathoms, 120-300 feet off the coastline of Northern and Central California. Catch limit regulations have also been curtailed. The advice is to restrict rockfish catches to blacks and blues only and leave the color species alone. To protect Vermillion rockfish, a species reported to be overfished, the sub-limit north of Mendocino county line, including Del Norte, will be reduced to four fish within the Rockfish, Cabazon and Greenling complex 10- fish limit. All vessels must have a descending

device on board so endangered quillback may be returned to their habitat in a safe and secure manner, preserving the health of the species. Signage will be posted at the boat launch in the Crescent City Harbor.

Here is summary of the seasonal fathom restrictions for Del Norte's coastline:

- January 1- March 31, Closed.
- April 1-30, 50 fathoms offshore only fishery.
- May 1-September 30, 20 fathoms inshore fishery.
- Oct 1-31, 50 fathoms offshore only fishery.
- November 1-30, 20 fathoms inshore only fishery.
- December 1-31, 50 fathoms offshore only fishery.

Educating the angler remains a major challenge. If you are new to our area or unsure of these new restrictions, check with the DFWD or Englund Marine for clarification.

Now, go fish!