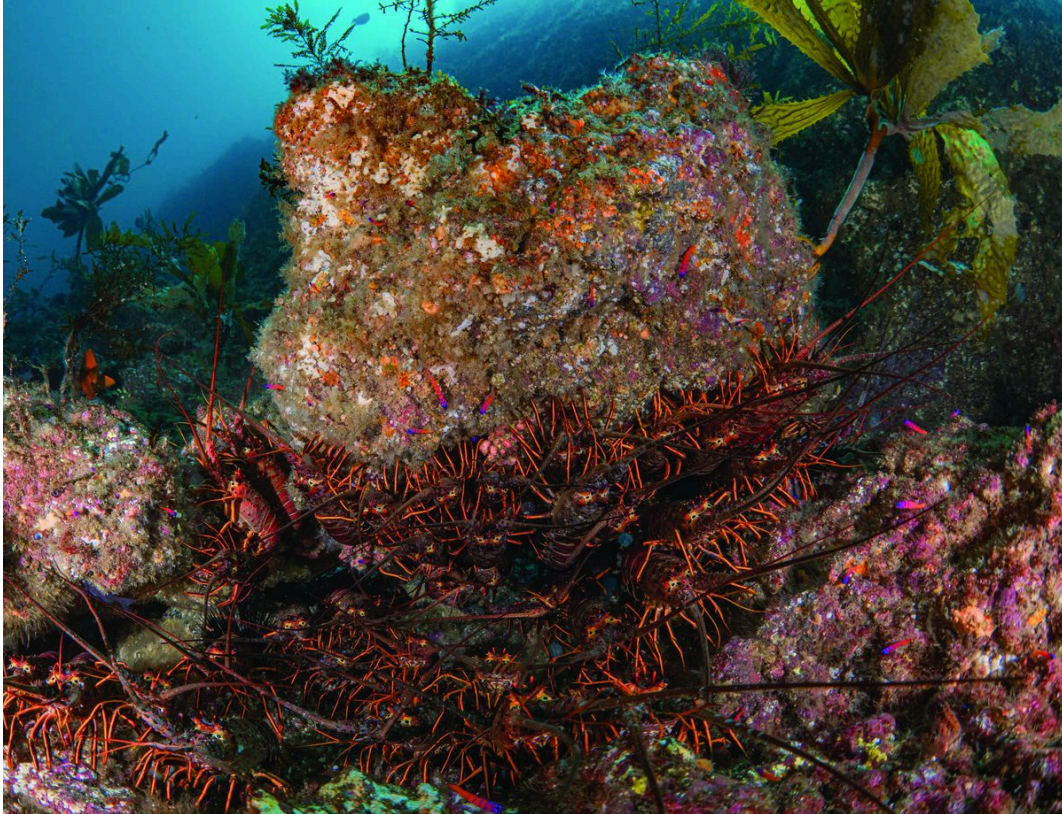


California lobster season opening Saturday

September 30, 2021



California's recreational spiny lobster season is set to kick off Saturday, Oct. 2, continuing through March 16. Last year's season was particularly active, likely driven by residents looking for opportunities for outdoor activities during COVID-19 lockdowns.

"We saw a record number of lobster report card sales during the 2020-21 lobster season," said California Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Environmental Scientist Jenny Hofmeister. "Typically, about 33,000 report cards are purchased each season, but nearly 46,000 were purchased this last season. Over half of those were new lobster hunters."

Season-opening weekend is one of the busiest times on the water, as thousands of lobster divers and hoop netters flock to their favorite lobstering spot. Before heading out to the water, be sure you know all the current regulations.

"No one can attempt to take lobster prior to 6 a.m. on Oct. 2. This includes baiting your hoop net or grabbing lobsters with your hand prior to 6 a.m.," said CDFW Capt. Eric Kord. "With a sunrise around 6:45 a.m. on

the morning of the opener, that means there will be a very short window of time to legally take lobster in the dark, when most lobsters are out.”

A lobster report card is required for all persons fishing for lobster, and individuals 16 years or older must have a valid sport fishing license and ocean enhancement stamp. Hoop netters and divers must fill out the date, location and gear type just prior to fishing. When finished fishing, or when changing locations or gear type, you must immediately record the number of lobsters kept from that location. Last season, over 54,000 lobster trips were reported with an average take of about two lobsters kept per trip. This average has remained relatively stable since 2008. Nearly half of the reported trips occurred during the first month of the season, and eight percent of all reported trips occurred on opening day with divers and hoop netters retaining almost 11,000 lobsters.

Lobster report cards must be returned or submitted online to CDFW at the end of each season by April 30, regardless of whether the card was used or whether any lobsters were caught. If you fill up a lobster report card, you can purchase another, but you must report catch from every card you purchase. Failure to report all lobster report cards by the reporting deadline will result in a nonreporting fee of \$21.60 when a lobster report card is purchased next season.

Lobster report cards can be purchased online. Report cards cannot be printed at home, so CDFW recommends allowing 15 days for the report card to arrive in the mail. Alternatively, lobster report cards can be purchased at participating sporting goods stores and other approved license sales agents.

The daily lobster bag and possession limit is seven. Any lobster kept must be at least 3 ¼ inches long measured in a straight line on the midline of the back from the rear edge of the eye socket to the rear edge of the body shell. Everyone taking lobster must have a measuring device capable of accurately determining legal length. A diagram illustrating this can be found on CDFW’s website.

Lobster can only be taken with hoop nets or by hand. No other device (such as spears or poles) may be used. No more than five hoop nets may be possessed by a person when taking spiny lobster or crab from a boat, and no more than 10 hoop nets may be possessed aboard a vessel, regardless of how many people are onboard. When using hoop nets on piers, jetties or other shore-based structures, only two hoop nets may be used.

When taking lobster, please consult the Ocean Sport Fishing Interactive Web Map for the California coastline to ensure you are not fishing in prohibited waters.

“It is extremely important that fishermen know the location and regulations for each Marine Protected Area (MPA) near where they will be fishing,” said Capt. Kord. “Unfortunately, every year numerous citations are issued to lobster fishermen, both divers and hoop netters alike, for unlawful take in an MPA.”