

Quillback Rockfish retention prohibited statewide

August 8, 2022



Retention of quillback rockfish (*Sebastes maliger*) is prohibited statewide in both the recreational and commercial fisheries effective Aug. 7, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) announced last week.

CDFW projects the combined recreational and commercial take of quillback rockfish will exceed the harvest limits specified in federal regulation for 2023, and in-season action must occur to reduce the risk of overfishing. Pursuant to California Code of Regulations Title 14, section 27.20(e), when federal harvest limits are projected to be exceeded, CDFW has authority to make in-season changes, including adjustments to bag and sub-bag limits.

The 2021 stock assessment for quillback rockfish off California indicated severe population declines. As a result, a recreational one-fish limit and reduced commercial limits were implemented in 2022 to reduce

catch. Further constraints to the groundfish seasons for 2023 have not sufficiently reduced catch for quillback rockfish to meet federal harvest guidelines.

CDFW urges anglers to use best fishing practices to reduce impacts to quillback rockfish and other prohibited species. These include reducing mortality when releasing fish by utilizing a descending device and relocating to different fishing grounds or switching targets if you are catching and releasing quillback rockfish or other prohibited species.

The Rockfish, Cabezon, Greenling (RCG) complex bag and possession limit will remain 10 fish daily, with a one fish sub-bag limit for copper rockfish, and a four fish sub-bag limit for vermilion rockfish.

Along with quillback rockfish, take of bronzespotted rockfish, cowcod and yelloweye rockfish continue to be prohibited year-round at all depths.

To better assist anglers with identifying rockfish species while fishing, CDFW has prepared informational flyers to distinguish quillback rockfish from similar looking species, such as China and black-and-yellow rockfish. Additional fish identification materials on rockfish and other species can be found on CDFW's Fish and Shellfish Identification web page.

CDFW will continue to monitor groundfish species of concern, such as quillback rockfish. If the current in-season change prohibiting take of quillback rockfish is not sufficient to reduce harvest, additional in-season actions such as modifications to the season dates and/or depth constraints may be implemented. Anglers are strongly encouraged to minimize catch of quillback rockfish and other prohibited species to reduce the possibility of further in-season actions in 2023 and beyond. CDFW recommends reviewing the Summary of Recreational Groundfish Fishing Regulations web page before each trip to ensure anglers are up to date on the most recent groundfish regulations.