



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 241022-0278]

RIN 0648-BO13

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries Off West Coast States; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; 2025-2026 Biennial Specifications and Management Measures; Inseason Adjustments

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule; inseason adjustments to biennial groundfish management measures.

SUMMARY: This final rule announces routine inseason adjustments to management measures in commercial and recreational groundfish fisheries. This action is intended to allow commercial and recreational fishing vessels to access more abundant groundfish stocks while protecting overfished and depleted stocks. Additionally, this inseason action is expected to help achieve the full attainment of the groundfish annual catch limit (ACL), thereby supporting \$164 million in ex-vessel revenue for commercial non-whiting groundfish landings and approximately 100,000 annual angler trips off Oregon.

DATES: This final rule is effective [*INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER*].

ADDRESSES: This rule is accessible via the Office of the Federal Register website at <https://www.federalregister.gov>. Background information and documents are available at the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) website at <https://www.pcouncil.org/>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christopher Biegel, 503-231-6291, *christopher.biegel@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (PCGFMP) and its implementing regulations at title 50 in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 660, subparts C through G, regulate fishing for groundfish off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. The Council develops groundfish harvest specifications and management measures for 2-year periods (*i.e.*, a biennium). NMFS published the final rule to implement harvest specifications and management measures for the 2025-2026 biennium for most species managed under the PCGFMP on December 16, 2024 (89 FR 101514). The final rule became effective January 1, 2025. In general, the management measures set at the start of the biennial harvest specifications cycle help the various sectors of the fishery attain, but not exceed, the catch limits for each stock. The Council, in coordination with Pacific Coast Treaty Indian Tribes and the States of Washington, Oregon, and California, recommends adjustments to the management measures during the fishing year to achieve this goal.

Canary rockfish commercial trip limits

In September 2025, the Council recommended, and NMFS implemented, an emergency rule revising the 2026 harvest specifications for shortspine thornyhead, canary rockfish, and petrale sole; the temporary rule became effective January 21, 2026 (91 FR 2714). The 2026 commercial non-trawl harvest guidelines (HG) for canary rockfish increased from 50.8 to 55.7 metric tons (mt), adding 4.9 mt to the fishery. This increase, combined with low attainment and discard concerns, supports reconsideration of trip limits to improve utilization. The current trip limits north of latitude 40°10' N. for limited entry fixed gear (LEFG) are 3,000 lbs. (1,361 kilogram (kg)) per 2 months and for open

access (OA) are 1,000 lbs. (454 kg) per 2 months. The current trip limits south of latitude 40°10' N. for LEFG are 3,500 lbs. (1,588 kg) per two months and for OA are 1,500 lbs. (680 kg) per 2 months. As detailed in Agenda Item D.5.a Supplemental Groundfish Management Team (GMT) Report 1, March 2026, the GMT evaluated two inseason trip limit change options.

Option 1 would increase the trip limit north of latitude 40°10' N. to match the limit south of latitude 40°10' N for each sector, setting LEFG at 3,500 lbs. (1,588 kg) per 2 months and OA at 1,500 lbs. (680 kg) per 2 months. Option 2 would increase coastwide trip limits north and south of latitude 40°10' N. to 4,000 lbs. (1,814 kg) per 2 months for LEFG and 2,000 lbs. (907 kg) per 2 months for OA.

Table 1 of the Supplemental GMT Report provided the projected canary rockfish mortality associated with each option as compared to the 2026 commercial non-trawl HG (55.7 mt). Under option 1, attainment of the commercial non-trawl HG is projected to increase to 70 percent. Under option 2, attainment is projected to increase to 87 percent. Option 2 provides a substantial buffer between projected mortality and the fishery HG, while increasing access to shelf species, reducing discards, improving HG attainment, and simplifying management. Additionally, option 2 was requested by LEFG and OA fishery participants and has industry support. Therefore, at the March 2026 meeting, the GMT recommended Option 2 to set coastwide canary rockfish trip limits at 4,000 lbs. (1,814 kg) per 2 months for LEFG and 2,000 lbs. (907 kg) per 2 months for OA, north and south of latitude 40°10' N.

For these reasons, the Council recommended, and NMFS is implementing, an inseason increase in the commercial non-trawl canary rockfish trip limits coastwide. The new limits for 2026, north and south of latitude 40°10' N will be 4,000 lbs. (1,814 kg) per 2 months for LEFG, and 2,000 lbs. (907 kg) per 2 months for OA.

Oregon Long-Leader Recreational Bag Limits

At the March 2026 meeting, the Council also recommended, and NMFS is implementing, inseason adjustments to the Oregon recreational long-leader fishery overall bag limit and the canary rockfish sub-bag limit. Currently, the long-leader fishery's overall bag limit for fishing in federal waters off Oregon is 12 fish and the canary rockfish sub-bag limit for federal waters is 1 fish.

During the 2025-26 harvest specifications process, a 5-fish sub-bag limit for canary rockfish was evaluated to provide a range for state regulations to work within, as the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) adopts state regulations each December for the following calendar year. For 2026, the OFWC adopted a 2-fish sub-bag for canary rockfish in the long-leader fishery to reduce regulatory discards and respond to the recent emergency action to increase the coastwide ACL for canary rockfish. As recommended by the Council in September 2025, NMFS took emergency action to increase the Oregon recreational HG for canary rockfish from 26.1 to 28.6 mt for 2026, adding 2.5 mt to the fishery.

The Oregon recreational HG of 26 mt was fully attained in 2025. For 2026, in order to attain but not exceed other species' catch limits, OFWC adopted a 10-fish bag limit for the long-leader fishery instead of the 12-fish bag limit for federal waters. In order to allow additional opportunity for full utilization of the Oregon recreational HG for canary rockfish for 2026, the Council recommended, and NMFS is implementing, inseason action to increase the canary rockfish sub-bag limit from 1 to 2-fish for the recreational long-leader fishery in federal waters off Oregon. Further, the Council recommended, and NMFS is implementing, inseason action to reduce the long-leader fishery bag limit in federal waters from 12 to 10-fish in order to establish consistent regulations for the fishery. To ensure that the 2026 canary rockfish ACL is not exceeded, ODFW will continue to monitor canary rockfish landings and discard mortality inseason from the long-leader gear.

In summary, the Council recommended, and NMFS is implementing, an increase of the canary rockfish sub-bag limit from 1 to 2-fish for the Oregon recreational long-leader fishery in federal waters and a reduction in the fishery's bag limit from 12 to 10-fish.

Classification

This final rule makes routine inseason adjustments to groundfish fishery management measures, based on the best scientific information available, consistent with the PCGFMP and its implementing regulations.

This action is taken under the authority of 50 CFR 660.60(c) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

The aggregate data upon which these actions are based are available for public inspection by contacting Christopher Biegel in NMFS West Coast Region (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**, above), or view at the NMFS West Coast Groundfish website:

<http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish/index.html>.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b), NMFS finds good cause to waive prior public notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment would be impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The routine inseason adjustments to management measures in this rule modify trip limits for fisheries in federal waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California by implementing trip limits designed to increase utilization while keeping catch within allocations established by the 2025-2026 harvest specifications. No aspect of this action is controversial, and changes of this nature were anticipated in the final rule for the 2025-2026 harvest specifications and management measures, which published on December 16, 2024 (89 FR 101514).

The Council recommended, and NMFS is implementing, an increase to the commercial non-trawl canary rockfish trip limits north and south of latitude 40°10' N. to

4,000 lbs. (1,814 kg) per 2 months for LEFG and 2,000 lbs. (907 kg) per 2 months for OA. Non-trawl rockfish allocations are generally underutilized and providing the LEFG and OA fishery with increased access to these stocks will have economic benefits without jeopardizing the stocks' ACLs. Additionally, the Council recommended, and NMFS is implementing, an increase of the canary rockfish sub-bag limit for the Oregon recreational long-leader fishery in federal waters from 1 to 2-fish and a reduction of the fishery's overall bag limit from 12 to 10-fish. Both measures are already in effect in state regulations. This action will therefore create consistency between Federal and State regulations.

This inseason action was developed through the Council process, which includes the opportunity for public comment. There was no opposition to any aspect of the rule in that venue. Delaying implementation of this rule to allow for additional public comment would reduce the economic and other benefits to commercial and recreational fishermen and fishing communities, including to businesses that rely on the fishing industry. To realize the full projected benefits of this inseason action to fishermen and fishing communities the new trip limits should be effective as soon as possible. A delay in implementation could also contribute to unnecessarily discarded and largely wasted fish, which could otherwise be landed to provide food and revenue. Thus, waiver of the requirement for prior notice and an opportunity for public comment under 5 U.S.C. 553(b) supports responsible use of the resource.

In addition, for the reasons described above, NMFS finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(1) so that this final rule may become effective upon filing with the Office of Federal Register. The adjustments to management measures in this rule affect commercial and recreational fisheries by increasing opportunity and allowing greater economic and other benefits to fishermen and fishing communities, while keeping catch within allocations established by the 2025-

2026 harvest specifications. These adjustments were requested by the Council’s advisory bodies, as well as members of industry during the Council’s March 2026 meeting, and recommended unanimously by the Council following a public process. No aspect of this action is controversial, and changes of this nature were anticipated in the biennial harvest specifications and management measures established through notice and comment rulemaking (89 FR 101514).

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 660

Fisheries, Fishing, and Indian Fisheries.

Dated: April 29, 2026.

Kelly Denit,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, NMFS amends 50 CFR part 660 as follows:

PART 660—FISHERIES OFF WEST COAST STATES

1. The authority citation for part 660 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*, and 16 U.S.C. 7001 *et seq.*

2. Amend table 2b (North) to part 660, subpart E by revising the entry for “Canary rockfish” to read as follows:

Table 2b (North) to Part 660, Subpart E—Trip Limits for Limited Entry Fixed Gear North of 40°10’ N Lat.

Species	Trip limit
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Canary rockfish	4,000 lb/2 months.

3. Amend table 2b (South) to part 660, subpart E by revising the entry for “Canary rockfish” to read as follows:

Table 2b (South) to Part 660, Subpart E—Trip Limits for Limited Entry Fixed Gear South of 40°10’ N Lat.

Species	Trip limit

Canary rockfish	4,000 lb/2 months.

4. Amend table 3b (North) to part 660, subpart F by revising the entry for “Canary rockfish” to read as follows:

Table 3b (North) to Part 660, Subpart F—Trip Limits for Open Access North of 40°10’ N Lat.

Species	Trip limit

Canary rockfish	2,000 lb/2 months.

5. Amend table 3b (South) to part 660, subpart F by revising the entry for “Canary rockfish” to read as follows:

Table 3b (South) to Part 660, Subpart F—Trip Limits for Open Access South of 40°10’ N Lat.

Species	Trip limit
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Canary rockfish	2,000 lb/2 months.
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6. In § 660.360 revise paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) to read as follows:

§ 660.360 Recreational fishery—management measures.

* * * * *

(c) * * *

(2) * * *

(iii) * * *

(A) *Marine fish*. The bag limit is 10 marine fish per day, which includes rockfish, kelp greenling, cabezon, and other groundfish species; except the daily bag limit in the long-leader gear fishery is 10 fish per day with a sub-bag limit of 2 fish per day for canary rockfish. The bag limit of marine fish excludes Pacific halibut, salmonids, tuna, perch species, sturgeon, sanddabs, flatfish, lingcod, striped bass, hybrid bass, offshore pelagic species, and baitfish (*e.g.*, herring, smelt, anchovies, and sardines). The minimum size for cabezon retained in the Oregon recreational fishery is 16 in (41 cm) total length.

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