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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

RIN 0648-BO46

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries off West Coast States; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan; Amendment 38; 2027-28 Biennial Specifications and Management Measures

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

ACTION: Notice of availability of proposed fishery management plan amendment and associated draft Environmental Assessment (EA); request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) submitted amendment 38 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (Groundfish FMP) to the Secretary of Commerce for review. If approved, amendment 38 would revise the Groundfish FMP to reflect the rebuilt status of yelloweye rockfish and the California stock of quillback rockfish, removing all references to their respective rebuilding plans from the FMP. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, NMFS also announces the availability of a draft EA that analyzes the potential effects of the action. NMFS requests public comment on the draft EA.

DATES: Comments on amendment 38 must be received on or before Saturday, September 19, 2026.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2026-1354, by the following method:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov> and enter NOAA-NMFS-2026-1354 in the Search box. Click on the “Comment” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on <https://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

Electronic copies of proposed amendment 38 may be obtained from <https://www.regulations.gov> and the NMFS West Coast Region website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/west-coast>. The draft integrated analysis, including an EA that addresses the NEPA, as well as analyses that address Executive Order 12866, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, and the statutory requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) (collectively referred to as “the Analysis”), may be obtained from the Groundfish Actions NEPA website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/laws-policies/groundfish-actions-nepa-documents>. For access to the stock assessment documents referenced in this notice,

please visit the Pacific Fishery Management Council website at
<https://www.pcouncil.org/>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Meghan Roberts, 206-526-4048,
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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the Federal groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone seaward of Washington, Oregon, and California under the Groundfish FMP. The Council prepared and NMFS implemented the Groundfish FMP under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.* and by regulations at 50 CFR parts 600 and 660. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that each regional fishery management council submit any FMP or plan amendment it prepares to NMFS for review and approval, disapproval, or partial approval by the Secretary of Commerce. The Magnuson-Stevens Act also requires that NMFS, upon receiving an FMP or amendment, immediately publish a notice that the FMP or amendment is available for public review and comment. This notice announces that proposed amendment 38 to the Groundfish FMP is available for public review and comment. NMFS will consider the public comments received during the comment period described above in determining whether to approve, partially approve, or disapprove amendment 38 to the Groundfish FMP.

Background

Yelloweye rockfish (*Sebastes ruberrimus*) was declared overfished in 2002. A 2025 update stock assessment estimated that the stock of yelloweye rockfish off the continental U.S. West Coast is currently at 40.1 percent of its unexploited level (*see* Status of Yelloweye rockfish off the U.S. West Coast in 2025 at

<https://www.pcouncil.org/>). At its September 2025 meeting, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended the new assessment as the best scientific information available (BSIA) and suitable for informing management decisions. At the September 2025 meeting, the Council voted to adopt the September 2025 update assessment for yelloweye rockfish off the U.S. West Coast, using data through 2024 (see the Council's September 2025 Decision Summary at <https://www.pcouncil.org/>). In April 2026, NMFS's Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) endorsed the 2025 stock assessment as the BSIA. NMFS updated the overfished status of yelloweye rockfish from overfished to rebuilt on May 19, 2026.

The California stock of quillback rockfish (*Sebastes maliger*) was declared overfished in 2023, based on the results of an update stock assessment completed in 2021 (see Status of quillback rockfish in U.S. waters off the coast of California in 2021 using catch and length data at <https://www.pcouncil.org/>). A benchmark stock assessment was completed for the California stock of quillback rockfish in 2025, which incorporated California-specific data (see Status of Quillback rockfish in U.S. waters off California in 2025 at <https://www.pcouncil.org/>). This benchmark stock assessment considerably revised the Council's and NMFS's past and current perception of stock status and indicates that the stock is currently above the target biomass level. The 2025 assessment estimates that the California stock of quillback rockfish off the continental U.S. West Coast is currently at 43.5 percent of its unexploited level. At its August 2025 meeting, the Council's SSC recommended the new assessment as the BSIA and suitable for informing management decisions. At the September 2025 meeting, the Council voted to adopt the

September 2025 benchmark assessment for the California stock of quillback rockfish off the U.S. West Coast, using data through 2024 (see the Council's September 2025 Decision Summary at <https://www.pcouncil.org/>). Also in September 2025, NMFS's NWFSC and SWFSC endorsed the 2025 stock assessment as the BSIA. NMFS updated the overfished status of the California stock of quillback rockfish from overfished to rebuilt on September 16, 2025.

At the June 2026 meeting, the Council recommended that the Groundfish FMP be amended to reflect the rebuilt status of yelloweye rockfish and the California stock of quillback rockfish (see June 2026 Decision Summary at <https://www.pcouncil.org/>). In terms of specific changes to the Groundfish FMP, amendment 38 would remove all mention of yelloweye rockfish and the California stock of quillback rockfish as rebuilding and all references to their rebuilding plans.

NMFS welcomes comments on the proposed FMP amendment through the end of the comment period. A proposed rule to implement amendment 38 has been submitted for Secretarial review and approval. NMFS expects to publish and request public review and comment on proposed regulations to implement amendment 38 in the near future. For public comments on the proposed rule to be considered in the approval or disapproval decision on amendment 38, those comments must be received by the end of the comment period on the amendment. All comments received by the end of the comment period for the amendment, whether specifically directed to the amendment or the proposed rule, will be considered in the approval/disapproval decision.

(Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*)

Dated: July 17, 2026.

Shannon Bettridge,

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National Marine Fisheries Service.

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