Hi All,

So here is our first information from our little group that has gotten together regarding the Nearshore Groundfish Closure that has affected Crescent City, Del Norte County and most of the California coast. You have given us your email to receive further updates regarding this closure.

First, I am going to give you a little background. We are just a handful of concerned fisher people that are trying to exercise our rights to fish and find out exactly why this closure happened and what will happen to our future fishing. We don’t have a name, we are not an organization, we are not a profit or non profit club. We are sport fishermen, charter boat captains and merchants. The Pacific Fishery Management Council had their September meeting and we tried to get as many people to write in to the public comments. All of this happened very fast and we didn’t have a lot of time to get things done. What we did do was put together some money and actually sent Harry Adams to the September meeting in Seattle Washington. He was able to speak during the public comment period. He was only allowed to speak for 6 minutes, but the committee let him finish his 12 minute long speech. During that time, they asked a lot of questions and invited him to 2 different sub committee meetings.

I personally have learned a lot regarding the organizations controlling our fisheries. I can give you a little bit of the information that I know. Some of it might not be exactly accurate, but here goes:

**The Pacific Fishery Management Council**

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. We recommend fishery management measures in the Federal waters off Washington, Oregon, and California. The Council has jurisdiction over the U.S. West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone (3-200 miles offshore). The Council manages commercial, recreational and tribal fisheries for about 119 species of salmon, groundfish, coastal pelagic species, and highly migratory species in Federal waters.

Washington, Oregon, and California manage fisheries in their state waters (1-3 miles offshore).

The Council process is a bottom-up process, emphasizing public participation and involvement. Participants include commercial and recreational fishermen, fish processors, tribal members, environmental and community representatives, consumers, and the general public. Along with fishery stakeholders, fishery and habitat scientists, state and tribal representatives, the U.S. Coast Guard and National Marine Fisheries Service all weigh in on whether an idea has merit and how it should be implemented. Decisions are made at [Council meetings](https://www.pcouncil.org/council-meetings/) that are held five times a year and that are scheduled far in advance. In preparation for each Council meeting, the [Council staff](https://www.pcouncil.org/navigating-the-council/membership-groups-and-staff/council-staff/) prepares a [briefing book](https://www.pcouncil.org/category/briefing-book/) that includes overviews of each agenda item, background information, and public comment.

Management measures developed by the Council are recommended to the Secretary of Commerce through the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Management measures are implemented by NMFS West Coast Regional offices and enforced by the [NOAA Office of Law Enforcement](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/enforcement), the 11th and 13th Coast Guard Districts, and local enforcement agencies.

The PFMC is composed of many governing bodies and many subcommittees.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife enforces the regulations of PFMC and the governing bodies.

* On August 7, 2023 CDFW closed all Quillback Rockfish Retention for the Nearshore Groundfish Fishery in the Northern Management Zone, which entails from the Oregon Border down to Cape Mendicino due to declining Quillback populations.
* On August 21, 2023 CDFW completely closed the Nearshore Groundfish Fishery. CDFW determined that the quota of approximately 2,000 pounds of Quillback Rockfish had gone over by 130%. Their argument was that since we were so vastly over the quota, that there was no room for mortality rates by catch and release. Hence, the total closure.
* On August 21, 2023 recreational boat-based groundfish fishery in the Northern Groundfish Management Area (from the CA-OR border to Cape Mendocino) will shift to an ‘offshore-only’ fishery beginning The offshore-only fishery permits fishing for lingcod, shelf rockfish, and slope rockfish seaward of the 50 fathom (300 feet) Rockfish Conservation Area boundary line.
* On September 1, 2023, CDFW closes the Nearshore Groundfish Fishery for Mendicino, San Francisco and the Central Management Area.

Note: the Nearshore Groundfish Fishery area is from shoreward to the 50 fathom line (300’).

So, as of right now, we can only fish for certain species of rockfish 50 fathoms or deeper. Which is unattainable for many sportfishermen, as they don’t have boats large enough to go that far out to fish. As most fisherman know, the Pacific ocean in the Crescent City area can be very volatile and can change very quickly. It would be very dangerous for a lot of boats to go that far out.

So, what we have questioned is how they got their data on the declining populations of the Quillback Rockfish. A lot of their data came from scientific models, trawl boats and fish checkers. What we are asking for is accurate data by doing hook and line surveys. Check the mortality rate when Quillback are released and how many are actually caught. Don’t give us a quota. Make the Quillback a zero catch, the same as the Yelloweye.

If we get a 2024 Nearshore Fishing Season, we in Crescent City will commit to doing our part by educating the public on zero retention of endangered species and the use of descending devices to release fish back to their proper depths to help prevent mortality. We will all have to work together to help protect any endangered fish.

This closure will be an economic disaster for the fishing communities all up and down the California coast. Crescent City relies on tourism. People come here to fish, see the ocean and the redwoods.

They spend a lot of money here. From motels, restaurants, merchants, stores, etc. If this closure remains in effect, some businesses will not recover from it.

Now, here is what we need from you, your friends, relatives, anyone that loves to fish and enjoy the benefits of coming to Crescent City.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is holding a Meeting November 1-8, 2023 to Adopt Management Measures for Ocean Fisheries. The meeting will be held in Garden Grove, CA. We are once again going to pool our personal money and send a representative to this meeting. Steve Huber will be going this time.

The general public can make public comments on their website up until October 23. I will post the link below. It’s real easy to do. If you are not sure how to write it, you can go to the September meeting and get ideas from there. The more comments there are, the more they will listen. And we need lots of comments.

Tell them your story, why you live in Crescent City or why you come here to vacation and fish. How you fish to put food on your table. The benefits of fresh caught ocean fish. How much you spend to fish. How you love to have your kids and grandkids experience fishing on the great Pacific Ocean. If you live and work in Crescent City and rely on tourism to put food on your table and pay your bills. Your personal story of why you would like to keep the nearshore groundfish fishery open. This is what PFMC needs to hear. Be proactive, not reactive. How you will commit to helping to protect any endangered species, use descending devices, educated other fellow fishermen.

One other topic we are working on is to try to get our Halibut quota increased. California only has 4% of the total Halibut quota, while Oregon and Washington have 22 and 28 percent. There is a section in the public comments that you can request more Halibut quota for California.

Here is the PFMC link: [Public Comments (psmfc.org)](https://pfmc.psmfc.org/Meeting/Details/3015) Scroll down to E5 and make your comment for Groundfish, G1 is for Halibut. You can also make any comments on any of the other measures. Just remember, be proactive, not reactive. You have until October 23 to get these comments in. The more people that comment, the more they will listen. Tell a friend.

I will keep you updated as I learn more.

Thanks,

Andrea Spahn

Recreational Sports Fisherman