



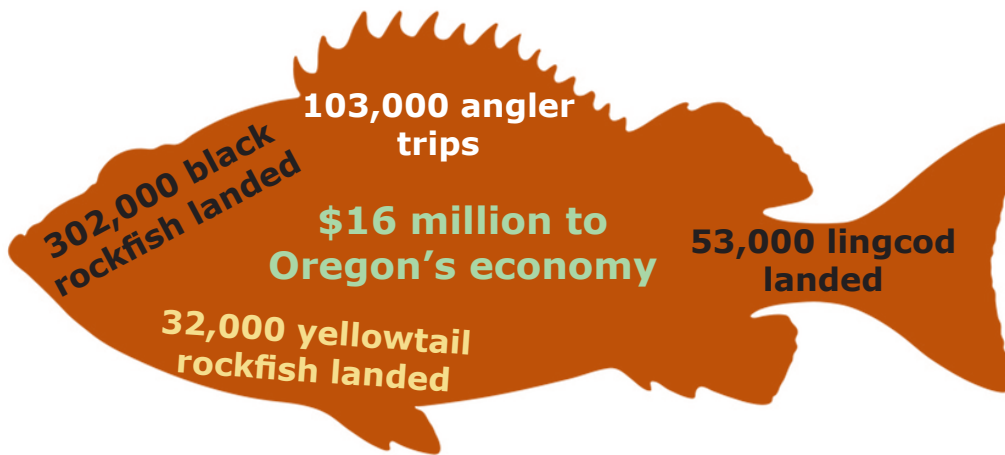
Marine Resources

3rd Annual Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Resources Program Sport Bottomfish Review (2020)

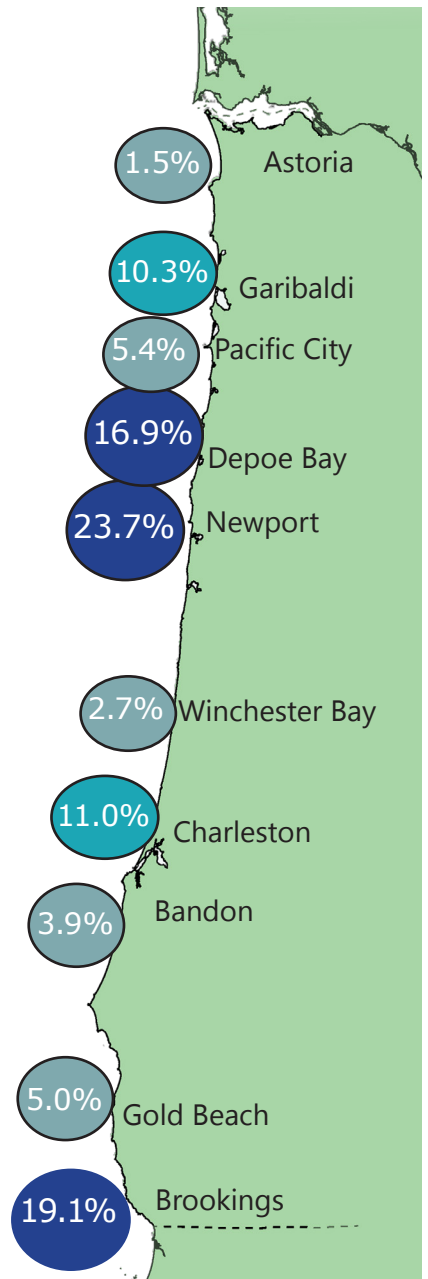


Bottomfishing off the Oregon Coast has become increasingly popular in recent years, and this trend continued in 2020 with more than 103,000 angler trips reported. Here is a summary of Oregon's 2020 sport bottomfish fishery, a season like no other due to the pandemic.

2020 Season Highlights



Percentage of bottomfish angler trips by port in 2020



Number of Bottomfish Angler Trips

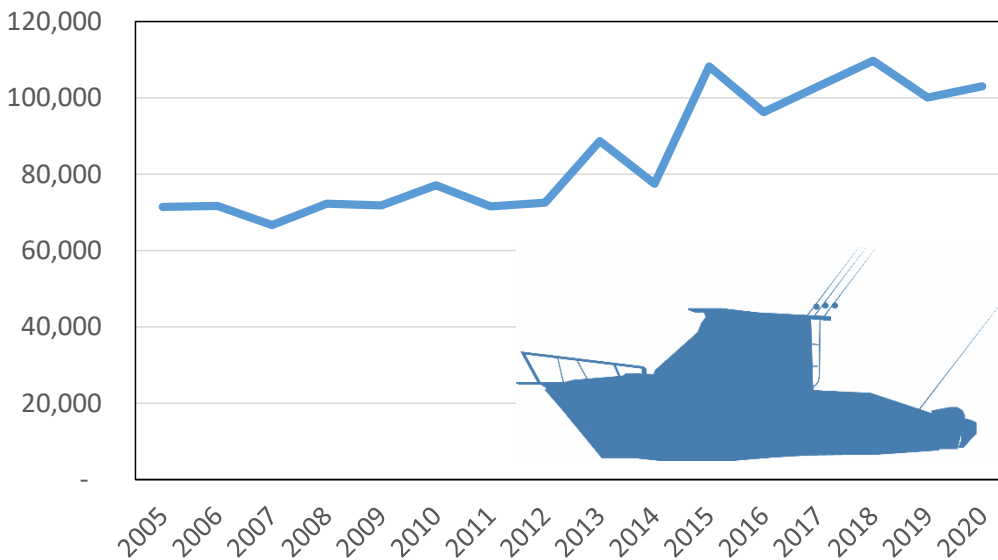


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Have a Question?

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Visit our website:

<https://myodfw.com/sport-bottomfish-seasons>

What Are "Bottomfish"?

Bottomfish, or groundfish, refers to several groups of fish that are generally associated with the ocean bottom. Off Oregon, this includes about a dozen species of rockfish, half a dozen types of flatfish, lingcod, cabezon, greenlings, sablefish, skates and rays, along with three species of sharks. Test your identification skills with the "[Common Bottomfish](#)" online quiz.



Bottomfish Identification: How and Why

With all of those species of fish, it can be difficult to know what you have caught. The ODFW website has a variety of tools to help anglers with fish identification including: [rockfish identification tips](#), [rockfish species information](#), [flatfish species information](#), and "[what can I keep and how many?](#)". Additional fun resources available online only are the popular "[Common Groundfish Species](#)" and "[Yelloweye Rockfish or Not?](#)" quizzes that will test your identification skills.

Correctly identifying fish is important for following species harvest and size regulations, and to accurately report species caught and released to the ODFW dockside sampler. It is also important to know your fish ID to avoid keeping an illegal fish.

2020: A season like no other

January: For the first time in 20-plus years, there was zero estimated ocean bottomfish effort or landings. Wind and waves kept most ocean access bars closed or restricted.

March: Effort picked up mid-month with good weather but lessened when COVID restrictions were then put in place, and many recreational public facilities, ports, charter operations, and public facilities were closed or reduced.

April: Some south coast facilities and businesses began limited reopening; those on central and north coast remained closed. There was some effort and landing by anglers with private vessels with reserved slips or access to private facilities coastwide.

May: Most public facility closures/restrictions were lifted. Charters reopened with limited clients. Bottomfish catch effort and landings began to rise.

Summer: As the summer progressed with many indoor activities restricted, many people turned to the great outdoors as an outlet seeking activities such as hiking, bird watching and fishing, some for the first time.



Depoe Bay Closure. ODFW photo



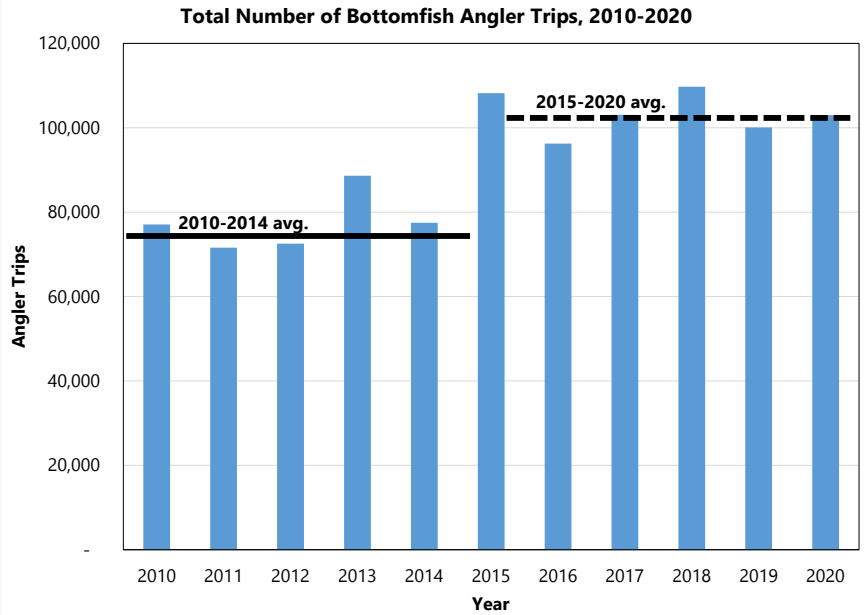
Bottomfish Effort in 2020

Even with the slow start and the spring restrictions, 2020 had the third highest number of bottomfish trips (103,000), continuing the trend that began in 2015 of approximately 100,000 bottomfish trips per year.

Prior to 2015 the average number of bottomfish trips was around 80,000 annually.



China rockfish



2020 Total Landings of Lingcod, Rockfish, and Cabezon

2020 was a good year for anglers catching a number of different species. Anglers landed just over 53,000 (161 metric tons (mt)) lingcod. Longleader gear allowed anglers to have good success catching mid-water rockfish species with more than 22,000 (38 mt) yellowtail rockfish, and 44,000 (46.4 mt) canary rockfish landed in the longleader gear and regular bottomfish fisheries combined.

Catch of black, blue, and deacon rockfish was up slightly from 2019. There were just over 302,000 (328 mt) black rockfish and 26,700 (20 mt) blue and deacon rockfish landed.

The catch of nearshore rockfish species (China, copper, and quillback rockfish) attained the quota by mid-July. Beginning July 20, retention of these species was prohibited for the remainder of 2020.



Black rockfish. ODFW Marine Reserves photo



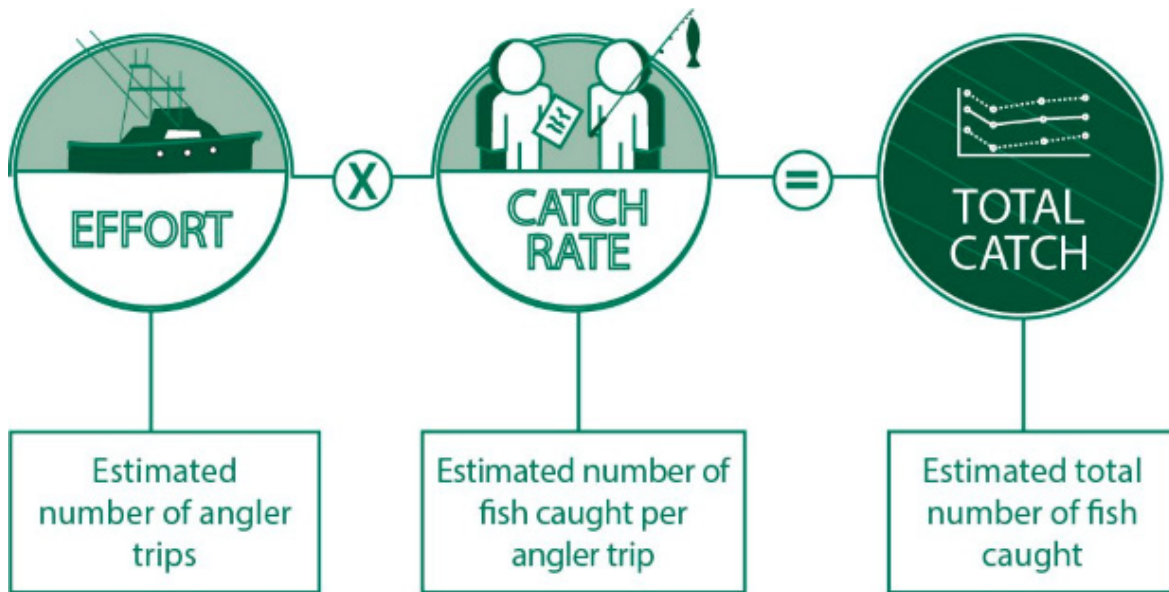
Nice lingcod. ODFW Marine Reserves Photo

The cabezon quota was reached very quickly again in 2020. In just six weeks anglers caught more than 4,700 fish (13.7 mt). This may be partially due to a large 2013-2014 year class of cabezon which have now reached legal-size for retention (16 inches).

Due to the catch of black rockfish being quite a bit below the quota, the sport bottomfish fishery daily bag limit was increased from five to seven fish per day on July 20 through the remainder of the year.

Calculating Catch Estimates

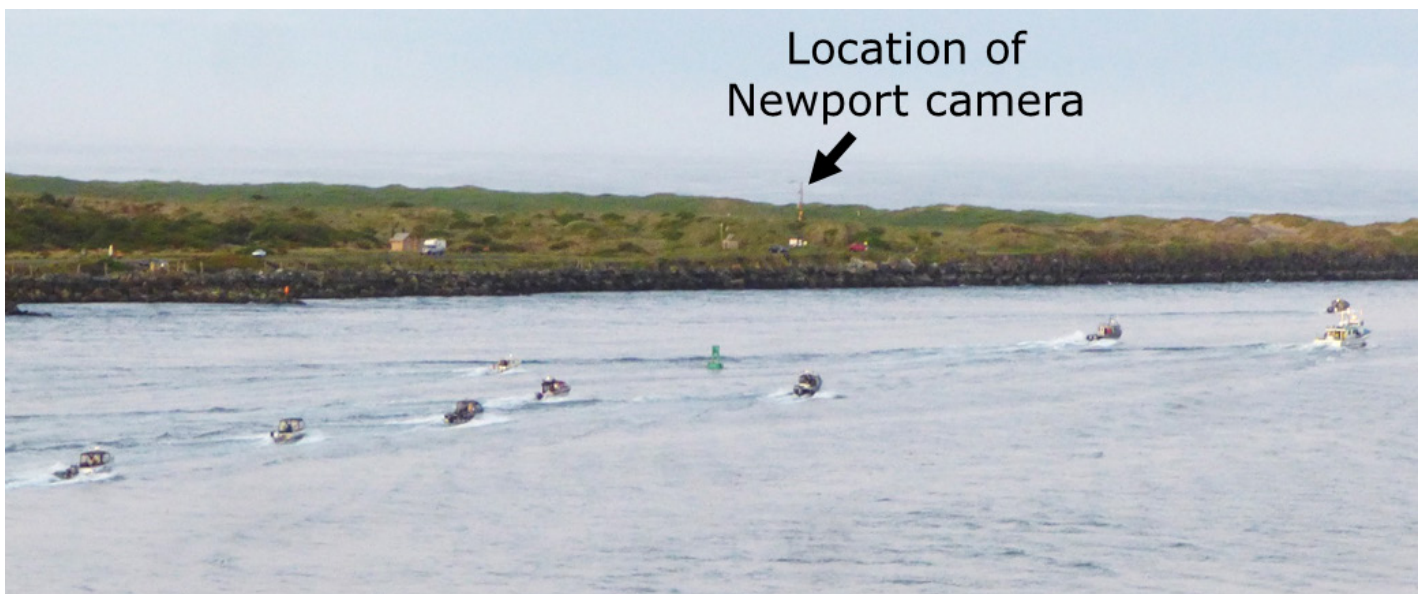
To calculate total catches, two pieces of information are needed: (1) effort and (2) catch rate.



To measure effort, ODFW has video cameras in most ports to count boats leaving and returning across the bar. The total number of recreational fishing boats counted (and anglers onboard) equals total effort.

ODFW samplers collect catch rate information by interviewing a portion of boats returning to the docks. Samplers document number of anglers, species fished for, the number caught and released, and collect length/weight of fish kept. The total catch is estimated by multiplying the number of anglers by the catch rate.

Other calculations and expansions may be needed to estimate catch for unsampled ports and times, but that is generally how total catch estimates are calculated. Additionally, these calculations are done separately for private and charter vessels.



Boats headed out to sea from Newport, OR. Photo courtesy of Lynn Mattes

Managing Fisheries with Quotas

For most recreationally important species, there is a federal or state specified annual quota (there are separate quotas for commercial fisheries). This is the amount of fish ODFW works with to set season structures and bag limits. Exceeding quotas could lead to overfishing or have an impact on other fisheries. Note that lingcod does not currently have a quota in Oregon's recreational fishery because all fisheries combined (commercial, recreational, tribal) are taking far less than the total allowable amount for the West Coast north of Cape Mendocino, CA, due to restrictions (e.g. seasonal depth restriction) necessary to minimize yelloweye rockfish bycatch.

Species	2020 Quota (mt)	2021 Quota (mt)
Black Rockfish	373.1	373.1
Blue/Deacon Rockfish	78.9	72.5
Cabezon	16.3	18.8
Canary Rockfish	66.7	65.2
Greenlings	25.1	21.8
Lingcod	No Quota	
Nearshore Rockfish Complex	11.5	10.7
Yelloweye Rockfish	7.2	6.9

The 2020 black rockfish quota was the same as last year. Until there is a new federal stock assessment (likely in 2023), the quota will remain similar to 2019 or decrease slightly each year.

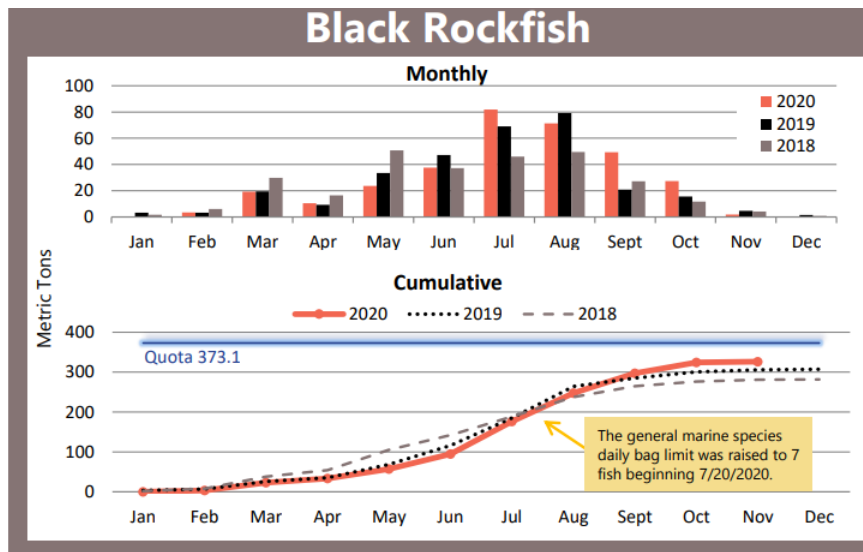
The yelloweye rockfish bycatch quota was similar for 2019 and 2020, but will decrease slightly for 2021. The yelloweye rockfish stock size has improved, though not large enough to allow anglers to retain them. However, with the current level some regulations that were designed to avoid yelloweye rockfish are somewhat relaxed.

The 2020 cabezon quota was the same as last year, and will increase slightly beginning in 2021 thanks to a new stock assessment. Canary rockfish and kelp greenling both have decreases, however recent years' catches have been under these decreased quota levels.

The 2020 quota for the species in the Nearshore Rockfish Species group (China, copper, and quillback rockfish) was similar to 2019, but will decrease somewhat for 2021.

See ODFW's [Sport Groundfish Estimates webpage](#) for current estimates.

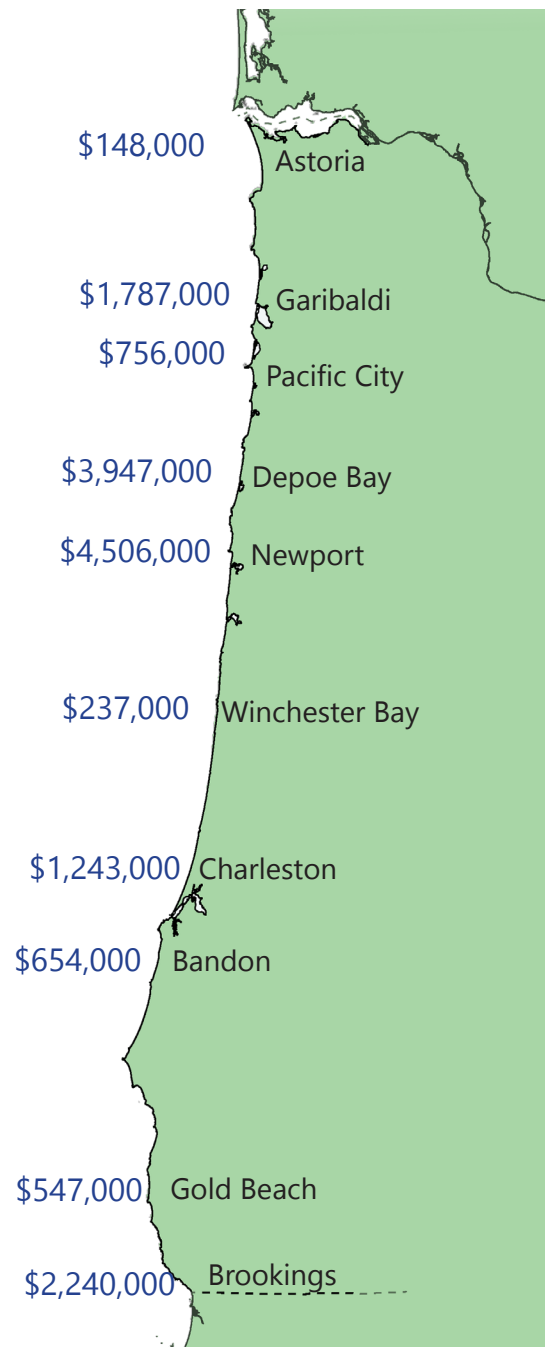
Example of inseason tracking for black rockfish found on ODFW's [Sport Groundfish Estimates webpage](#)



Bottomfishing is Good for the Oregon Economy

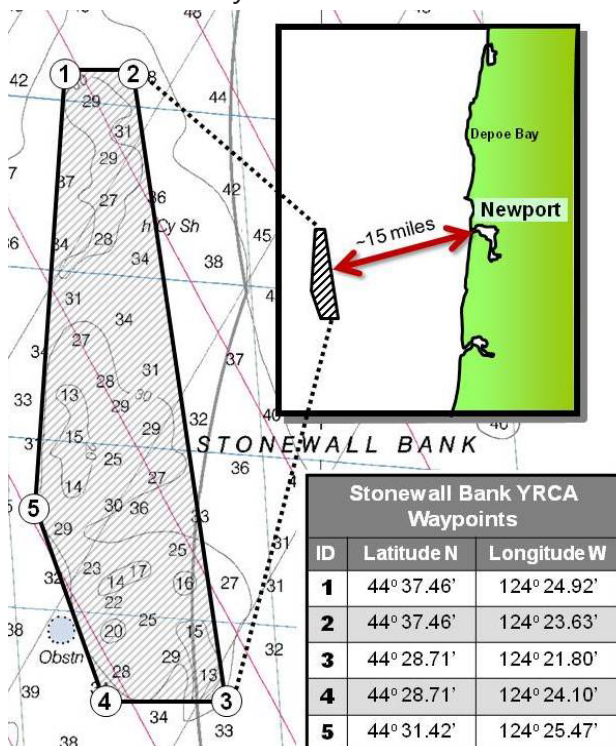
The continued high number of bottomfish trips in 2020 has been good for the economy of Oregon. Bottomfish charter and private trips combined contributed approximately \$17 million to the Oregon economy through fishing related expenditures such as gas, bait, gear, moorage, restaurants, and hotels. This translates to approximately the equivalent of 370 full-time jobs. Anglers fishing out of Newport and Depoe Bay had the most effort and highest economic contribution, with about \$5 and \$4 million, respectively. Anglers fishing out of Brookings and Garibaldi contributed between \$2 and \$2.5 million from each port. Even in smaller ports with lower absolute economic contribution numbers, the contributions can be large relative to other local economic activity, and are very important to coastal communities.

Contribution to the Oregon economy by bottomfish anglers fishing out of each port.



Enforcement

The Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division's Marine Fisheries Team helps ODFW by enforcing fishing regulations. They patrol both on land and at sea to ensure that fishing regulations are followed. Regulations are in place to keep fisheries sustainable, and enforcing regulations is a key piece to the overall management. Common issues encountered are: fishing without a license, exceeding the bag limit, retaining prohibited species (e.g., yelloweye rockfish) or undersized fish (e.g., lingcod or cabezon), and fishing in closed areas (e.g., Stonewall Bank Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area).



Stonewall Bank Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area, about 15 miles from Newport.

For information on Marine Reserves



<https://oregonmarinereserves.com/>

Rockfish Recompression: Help the Fish, Help the Fishery

Rockfish have a swim bladder which is a gas-filled organ that helps regulate buoyancy. The gas in the swim bladder expands when a fish is brought up to the surface, resulting in barotrauma. Signs of barotrauma include: swollen body, stomach and/or esophagus extending out the mouth, and/or bulging eyes. Because of the extra buoyancy from the expanded gas, some rockfish may not be able to swim down from the surface on their own.



Research has shown that rockfish released near the depth of capture have a higher survival rate. The Pacific Fishery Management Council incorporates this into management for some species. For yelloweye rockfish, releasing at depth has helped prevent additional fishery restrictions and reduced the chance of a recreational fishery closure due to bycatch.

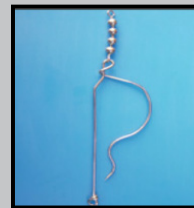
Types of Descending Devices

A variety of commercially available and homemade devices are used. Find what works for your vessel and set up.

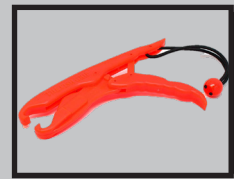
The three most common are:



[Seaqualizer](#)



[Shelton](#)



[Fish Gripper](#)

For additional information, see ODFW's Rockfish Recompression webpage:

<https://myodfw.com/articles/rockfish-recompression>

Looking Ahead & How to Get Involved

The [Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission](#) will finalize the 2022 sport bottomfish season at its meeting in December 2021. ODFW will be asking for your input on the 2022 season at an online meeting in late July or early August (date TBD). See the [Sport Bottomfish Webpage](#) for more information.

The [Pacific Fishery Management Council](#) process to set up allocations and fishery regulations for 2023-2024 will begin in 2021 and conclude in June 2022. During the summer of 2021 several stocks will be assessed; the most important ones to Oregon anglers being lingcod, copper rockfish and quillback rockfish. At its June 2022 meeting, the Council will finalize all of the allocations, season structures, and regulations for 2023 and 2024.



At each Council meeting, there is an opportunity for public input. Information on how to provide input to the Council can be found on the Council's website: <https://www.pcouncil.org/>

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