



Marine Resources

# Commercial Groundfish Newsletter

2023

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## It's Complicated

Unlike other fisheries in Oregon, commercial groundfish is made up of many different target species and many different gear types. This makes talking about the fishery as a whole somewhat complicated. In our groundfish fishery, industry targets multiple species including: whiting, sablefish, flatfish, and midwater rockfish. To target the wide range of species within groundfish, a diverse range of gear types are also used, including hook and line, longline, pots, and trawl gear.

Sometimes we portray these fisheries in terms of target species, sometimes in terms of gear. In the infographic below, landings into Oregon are totals of ALL the groundfish fisheries. The next sections will focus on the trawl catch shares program which includes the shoreside whiting fishery caught by midwater trawl, the sablefish fishery pursued by all the fleets, and the state-managed nearshore live fish fishery.

# 2022 Season Summary

## All Groundfish Groundfish Totals

**220** million pounds of groundfish landed

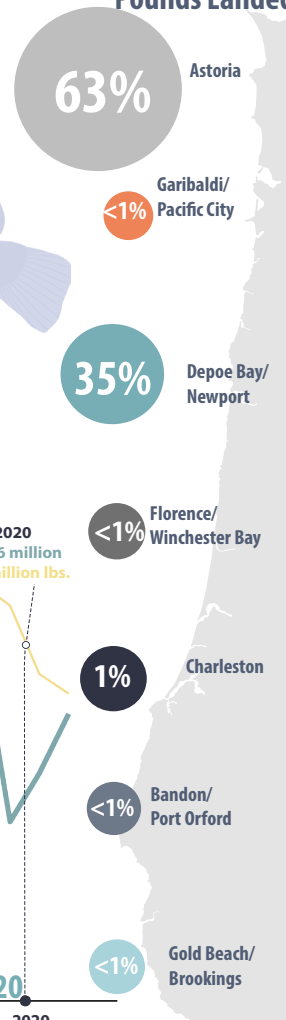
**\$49** million ex-vessel value of all commercial groundfish

This year total groundfish landings were **88%** of the five-year average (2017-21)

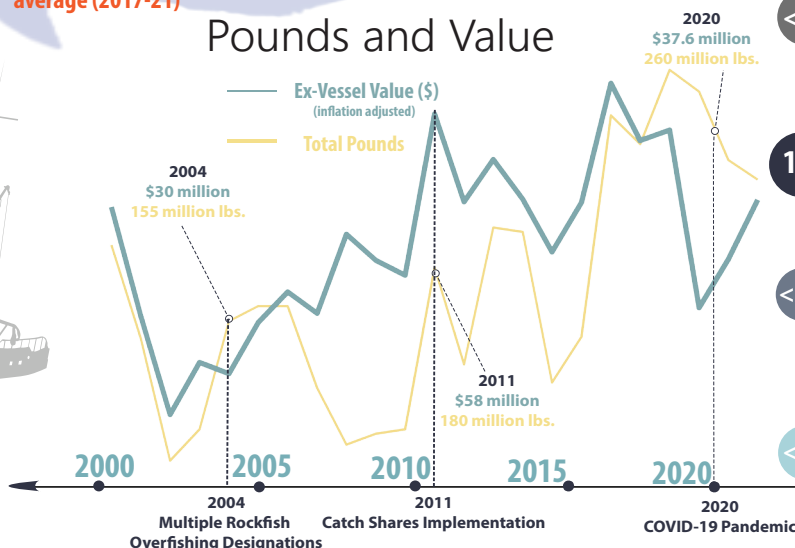
**324** commercial vessels



### Percent Total Groundfish by Pounds Landed



### Pounds and Value

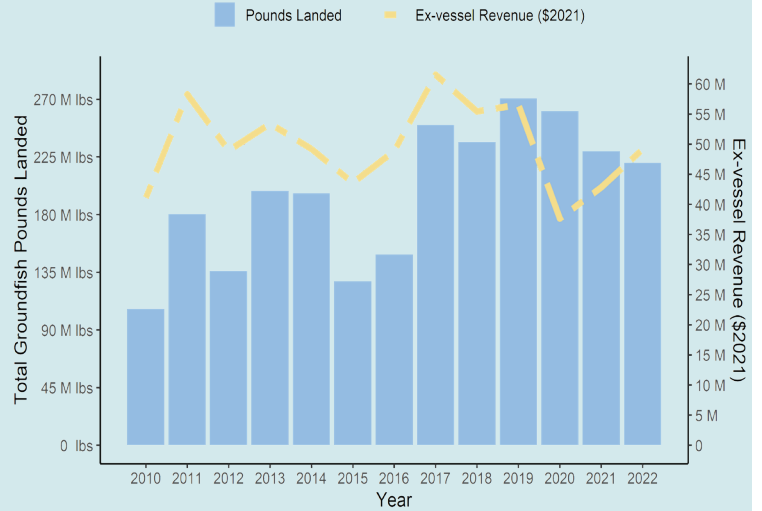


## It's Complicated (cont'd)

This newsletter will showcase parts of the groundfish fishery in three ways. First, it will showcase the trawl fishery, which includes bottom trawl, midwater trawl for pacific whiting, and midwater trawl for rockfish, as well as those who gear switch to catch their quota. Second, we will learn about the sablefish fishery that will contain information about fish caught in the catch shares program (trawl and gear switchers), the Primary Tier fishery, limited entry trip limit fishery and the open access fishery. We also want to feature a Nearshore fishery each year, and this year we will explore the live rockfish fishery that is primarily caught with hook and line on the Southern Oregon coast.

We tried to do this great fishery justice in this first newsletter but recognize there is always room for improvements. Please feel free to reach out with your thoughts and suggestions on improvements for future years.

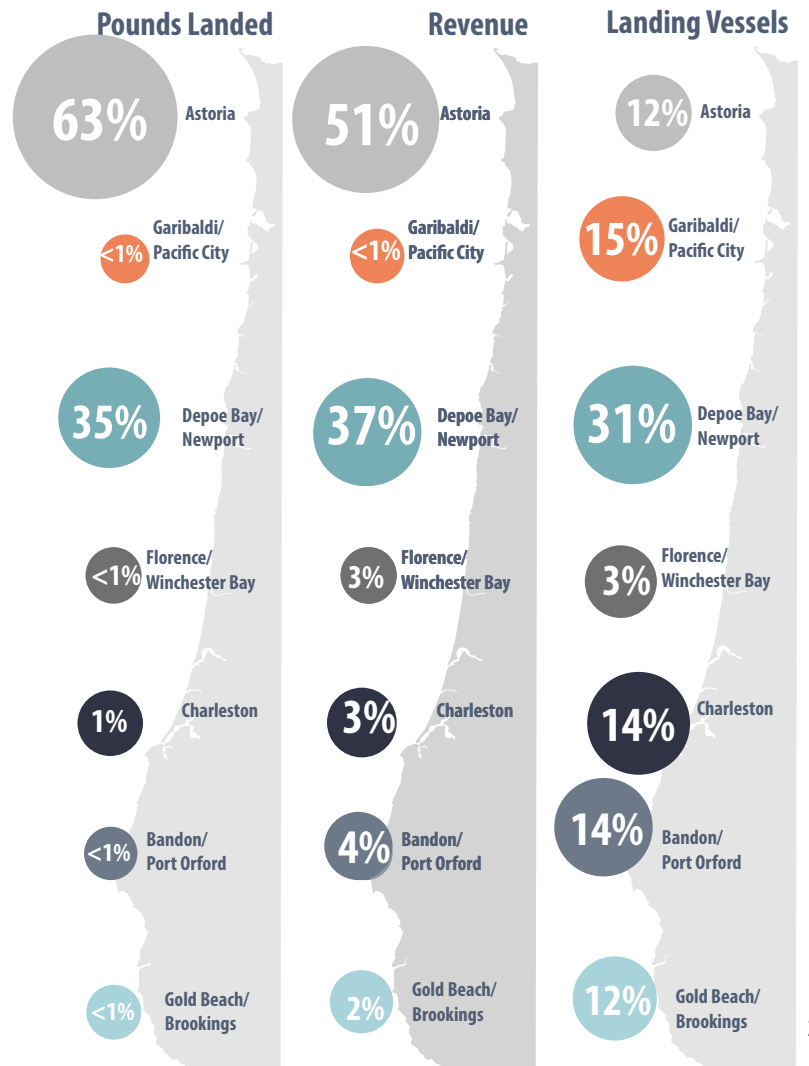
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# The Pounds Don't Tell the Whole Story

Part of the groundfish fishery is the whiting fishery that is a high volume fishery, which inflates the percentages in the pounds landed. Although Astoria is the highest volume and revenue port, it is not where the majority of the full groundfish fleet land their catch. The greatest number of vessels landing into Newport and vessels landing to the Central and South Coast make up 43 percent of the Oregon fleet.

What does this mean? More boats land to the Central to South Coast which account for less than two percent of the pounds landed and 12 percent of the state's revenue. Niche markets in the southern half of the state allow for different types of targeted species (such as the live fish fishery, see more on page 5). Greater numbers of smaller boats, from the nearshore fishery, catch less volume but still provide important revenue to our state and local communities.



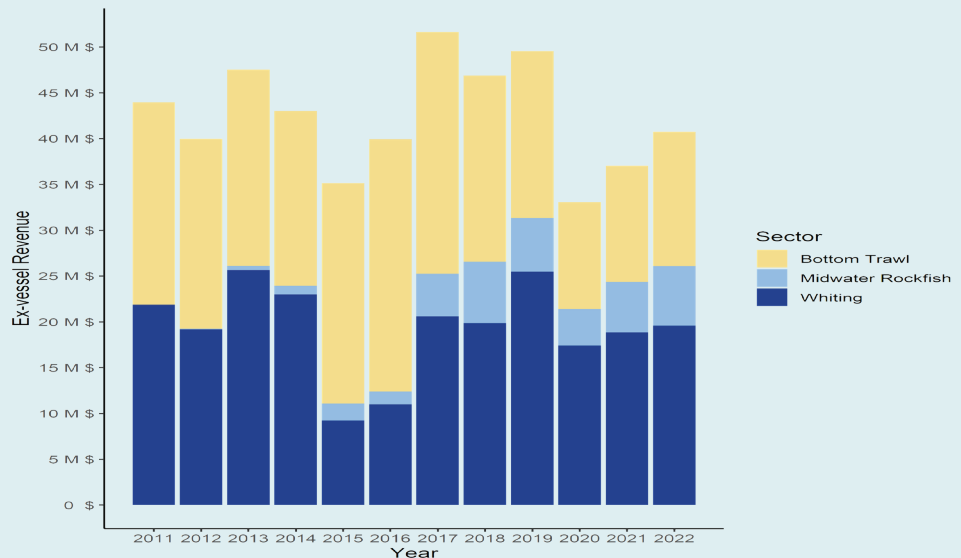
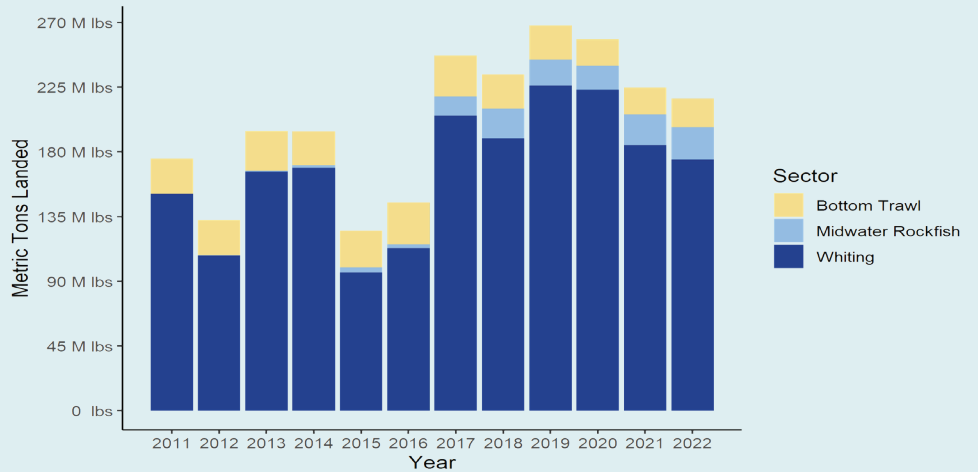
# Trawl Catch Shares Program

## A Little History

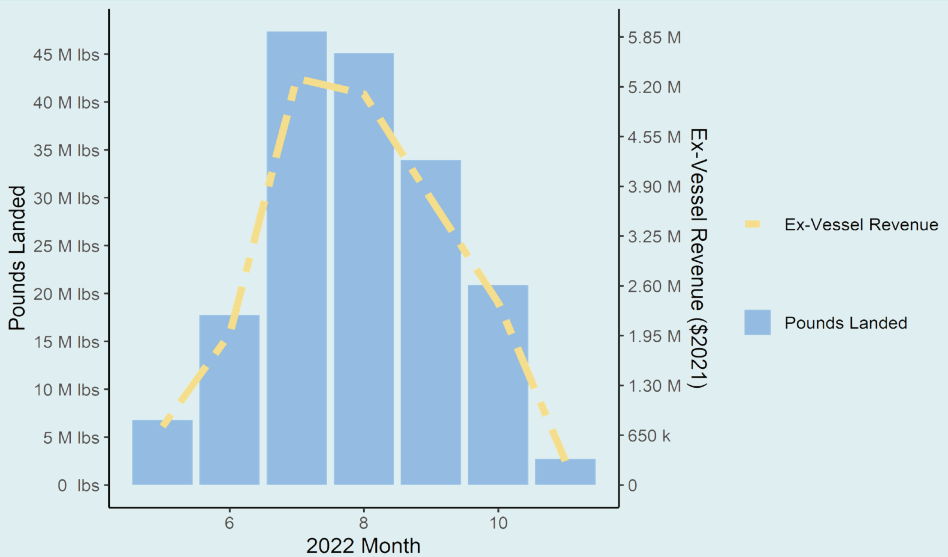
As of 2011, when the trawl sector was rationalized, the groundfish trawl fisheries are managed under an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) system. Individuals and/or businesses each own a certain percentage, called Quota Share, of the overall trawl sector's allocation for each species. This entitles them to an individual allocation of Quota Pounds each year that they can either fish or lease to someone else.

The IFQ system allows vessels more flexibility in where and when they fish, as long as all of their catch (including discards) is covered by their Quota Pounds. A 100 percent observer/ video monitoring requirement ensures that catches are fully accounted for, and everyone stays within their individual quotas. Area closures are used to protect sensitive habitats, such as rocky reef and corals, and can be used to reduce bycatch of non-IFQ species such as Chinook salmon.

Oregon vessels participate in bottom trawl, whiting and midwater rockfish trawl fisheries.



## The 2022 Whiting Season



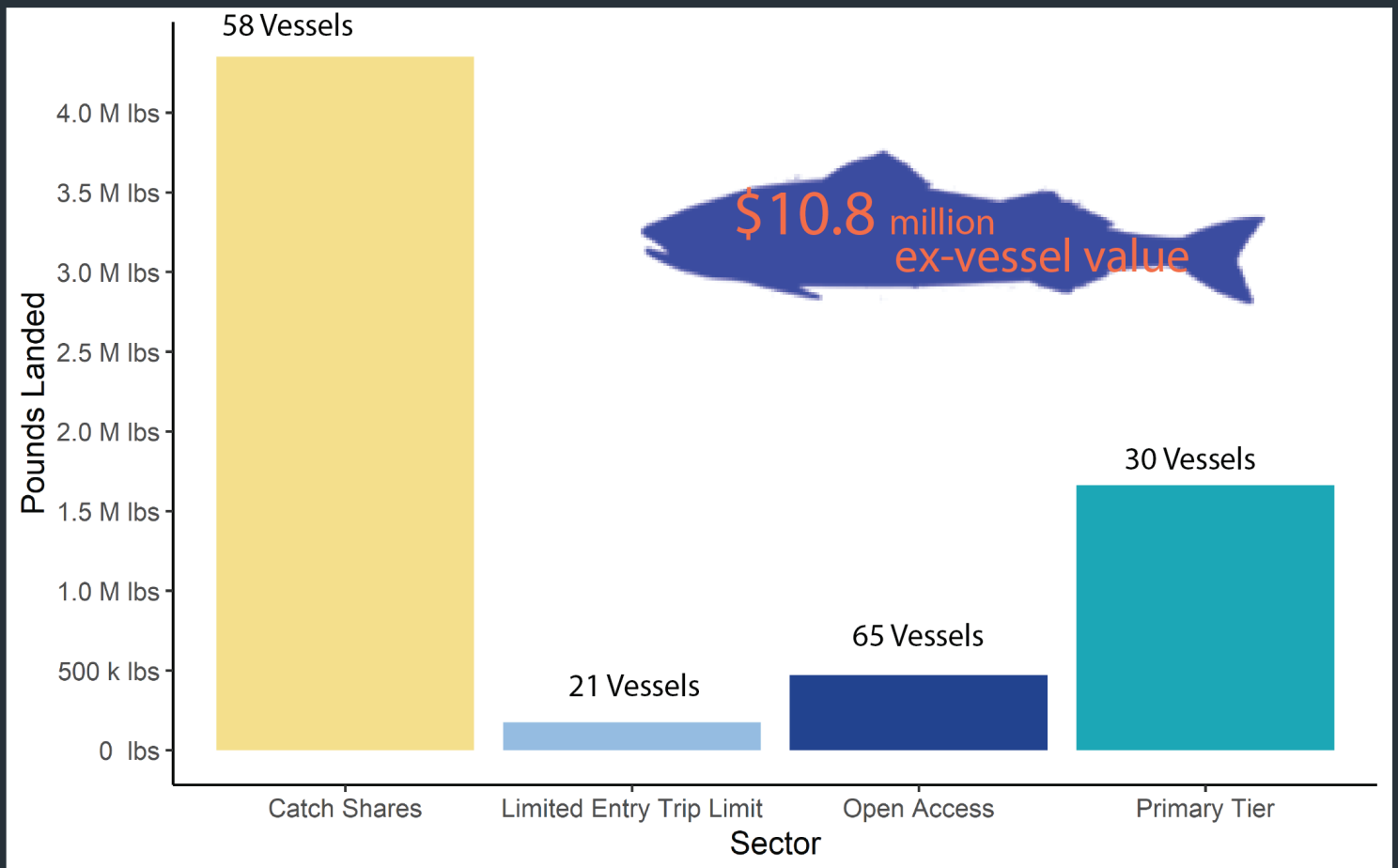
The 2022 shoreside whiting season was heavily impacted by high fuel prices. Scratchy fishing and lower condition fish also contributed to the very slow season start. By the end of the season the whiting catch was 80 percent of the total catch shares landings totals. Even with a slow season, this fishery still produced \$19.6 million ex-vessel revenue.

# Sablefish 2022 Season Recap

## Sablefish: The Universal Fish

Sablefish is a high value fish that is caught in almost every groundfish fishery sector along the Oregon coast. They have been showing up more and more in unique places, with catches occurring in the recreational and squid fishery in greater numbers. It is one of the fish that is caught by multiple gear types. The trawl catch shares program values them as part of their portfolio, both caught in the trawl fishery with Dover sole and shortspine thornyhead, and the participants who use fixed gear. There is a Primary Tier permit fishery, where boats either have a longline or a pot endorsement to catch a certain poundage. Outside of that permit season there is also a limited entry fixed gear trip limit fishery that operates in Oregon. The open access sector also takes advantage of this fishery.

The primary market is Asian markets, although more recently there has been an increase in local markets. The catch shares program landings are primarily in Newport and Astoria, with almost 4 million lbs being landed to those two ports. However, there are still participants in Charleston and Brookings that land sablefish within this sector. The limited entry daily limit sector landings are from Newport south, with the greatest amount of landings happening in Port Orford. Participants take advantage of the open access sector along the coast, with concentrations of landings and vessels in the ports of Port Orford and Charleston. The largest landings in the Primary Tier fishery happen in Newport, which also has the greatest number of vessels landing there.





# Spotlight on the Live Fish Fishery

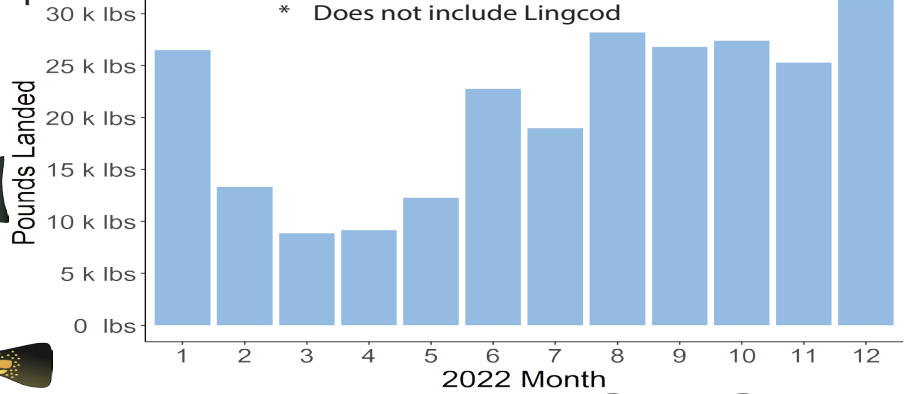
## 2022 Season Summary

The live fish fishery is a unique component of the state permitted\* Nearshore Fishery, where fish are landed, transported and sold live.

### Top Four Species



Art Credits: Larry Allen



\* Does not include Lingcod

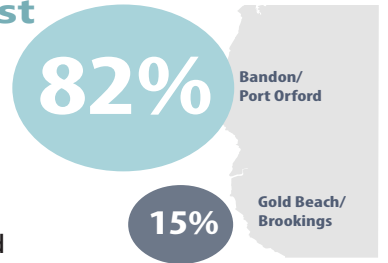
### Grand Totals

**251** thousand pounds  
**\$949** thousand ex-vessel value

**58** commercial vessels

### Focus on the South Coast

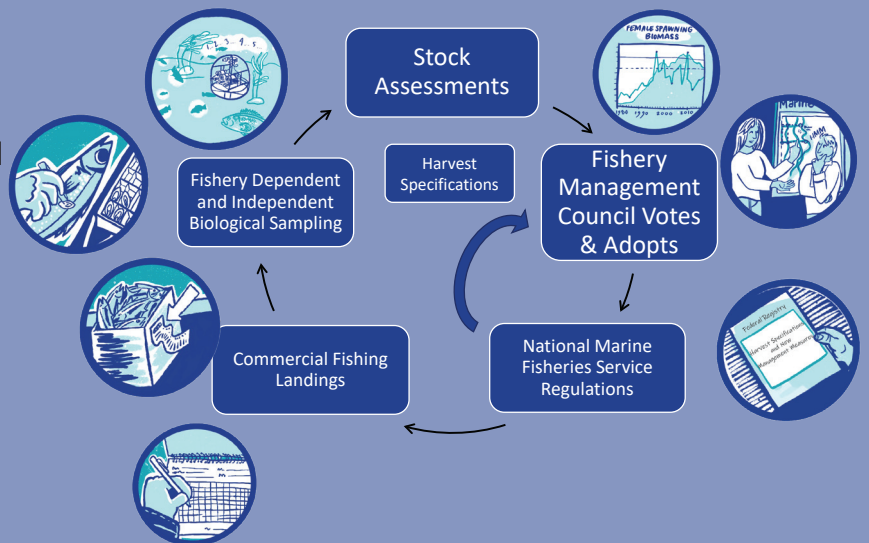
There have been 58 vessels that have landed live fish to a port between Bandon and Brookings. The Ex-vessel Revenue in those ports was \$912 thousand. There were a few vessels landing into Garibaldi and Newport for around \$36 thousand.



## How Do We Regulate Fisheries?

Members of ODFW participate in the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), which is the management body that regulates federal fisheries coastwide. The Council makes decisions based on recommendations from advisory bodies which include scientists, managers, industry, environmental organizations and public comment.

The Council meets five times a year; to see what we are discussing next, visit [www.pcouncil.org](http://www.pcouncil.org)



# Port Biologist Corner

## How Does MRP Monitor the Groundfish Fisheries?

ODFW's Marine Resources Program (MRP) port biologists sample offloads and collect biological samples that are used in stock assessments. There are really great people working in each of your ports, and they are your best interface with ODFW. The four port biologists ( to the right) also have many assistants who work with them. Shout out to Jim, Alexis, Joel, Camille, and Trinity!

## 2022: Notes from the Field



Sheryl in Astoria notes that many bottom trawlers reported that they fished closer to port whenever possible due to high fuel prices. Petrale, Dover, thornyhead, sablefish, POP, lingcod, and midwater rockfish continue to be the dominant catch targets of the year for the non-whiting trawl fleets.

## Commercial Monitoring



MRP port biologists conduct dockside sampling of commercial groundfish fishery vessels in the major ports.

Trawl and Fixed Gear Logbook data is collected, which includes species caught, incidental catch, trip dates, fishing area, and landing port. This is used to estimate effort and goes directly to the National Marine Fisheries Service.



In Newport, Scott remarked that the whiting season was difficult. Fish were hard to find during periods of time, or inconvenient grades. Punctuated by high fuel prices that affected all fisheries. But in good news, sablefish prices improved from pandemic lows.



MRP port biologists collect length information and biological samples from several hundred vessels throughout each year in order to describe the year-classes that are being landed.

MRP staff review fish ticket data on catch counts, weights, grade, and value to calculate the ex-vessel revenue for the fishery.



The South Central Coast Biologist, Katlyn, notes that the bottom trawl landings declined slightly with some boats getting out of the fishery and others struggling to find buyers. For those still fishing, the targets were mainly Petrale, Dover, thornyheads, and sablefish, with some boats also targeting Pacific sanddabs in the "beach" fishery. On the other hand, fixed gear landings targeting sablefish increased with a couple new buyers landing most of the offloads.

Valerie is the Southern Coast Port Biologist stationed in Brookings. She notes that effort seemed to decrease from previous years for bottom trawl caught groundfish with 9 fewer trips than in 2021, a 37% decrease from the average of the previous 5 years. One of the chief reasons was the high cost of fuel and supplies.





# Other Updates and Reminders

## Want More Information?

Here's how you get it

Visit Our Website



<https://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/commercial/>

For Federal Regulations:  
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-VI/part-660?toc=1>  
For Council Items:  
[www.pcouncil.org](http://www.pcouncil.org)



Marine Resources

We are always interested in hearing from you about your fishery and the issues that are important to you.

Please give me a call any time!

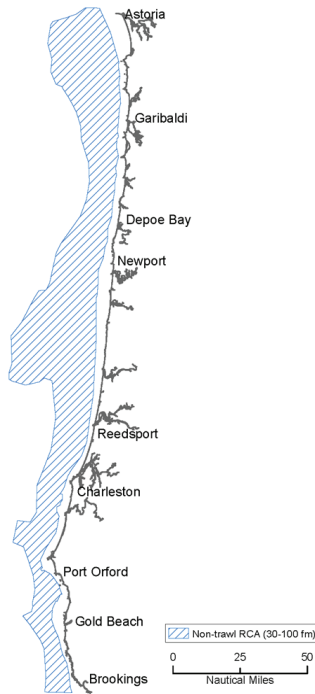
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Tell me what you think!

Are you a lumper or a splitter? How can I improve for next year?

## CHANGES IN THE 2023 GROUND FISH FISHERY



Starting in 2023, the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area is open to two types of non-bottom contact hook and line gear: "stationary vertical jig" and "groundfish troll". Full definitions are found in the compliance guide. This opportunity allows for fishing of plentiful shelf stocks up to open access limits.

For more information, please review the NMFS Compliance Guide, at [https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2022-12/ComplianceGuide\\_Groundfish2023-24Spex.pdf](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2022-12/ComplianceGuide_Groundfish2023-24Spex.pdf)

### For more information contact:

Lynn Massey, Fishery Management Specialist at the National Marine Fisheries Service, at (971) 238-2514 (office) or (562) 900-2060 (cell)

## FEDERAL FIXED GEAR LOGBOOKS

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has had a fixed gear logbook for a while, but there is now a new federal logbook that will be required in place of the Oregon logbook beginning in January 2025.

- Until January 2025, Oregon vessel operators can use either the standard Oregon Fixed Gear Logbook **or the new Federal Logbook** if you are **NOT** fishing inside the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA).
- **If fishing in the Non-Trawl RCA**, Oregon vessel operators are required to use the **Federal Non-Trawl Logbook**.
- Oregon Nearshore Permit holders fishing **outside the RCA** are still only required to use the Oregon Nearshore Logbook.
- Nearshore Permit holders fishing **inside the RCA** are required to fill out **BOTH** the Federal Non-Trawl Logbook and the Oregon Nearshore Logbook.

**Electronic logbook:** The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) has developed the Federal non-trawl electronic logbook application, which is now available for download on smartphones (IOS or Android devices). To download the application, please visit the PSMFC's website at: <https://www.psmfc.org/program/logbooks?pid=17>