

Catch limits increase for groundfish

Fish were severely depleted more than a dozen years ago

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Federal officials said Tuesday they are increasing catch limits for several species of West Coast groundfish that were severely depleted more than a dozen years ago in a crisis that posed a threat to the commercial and sports fishing industries.

Limits for yelloweye rockfish will more than double, while substantial increases will be allowed for California scorpionfish, bocaccio and Pacific Ocean perch, the National Marine Fisheries Service said.

Those species have recovered enough to allow for the greatest expansion of a West Coast fishery in years. The formal announcement of the revised catch limits will be published Wednesday and the changes go into effect on Jan. 1, the first day of the new fishing season.

Fishing income in California, Oregon and Washington could increase \$60 million because of the changes, with the potential for 900 new jobs and at least 200,000 more angler trips a year, according to a preliminary report.

"It'll actually allow us to fish," said Tom Marking, a recreational fisherman from Eureka, California.

"Right now, there are a lot of places you just avoid



NOAA Fisheries

Federal officials are increasing the catch limits for many types of groundfish because the numbers of one key species, the yelloweye rockfish, has rebounded much faster than expected under a restoration plan.

because they're known as yelloweye hot spots. You just stay away from them. If they allow us to go to 30 fathoms or 40 fathoms or all depths, it'll allow the fleet to spread out."

Between 1999 and 2002, nine West Coast groundfish stocks were declared overfished as surveys documented declining numbers.

Because more than 90 total groundfish species share the same habitat, anglers fishing for a permitted species risked also catching restricted fish and exceeding the overall limit — a mistake that could mean an end to the fishing season for that particular species.

The limits devastated the fishing industry along

the West Coast. Many businesses went under and tensions between the industry and federal regulators ran high for years.

"Back then, one boat could catch all the quota for one species in one day," said Jason Cope, a research fisheries biologist at the National Marine Fisheries Service. "There was a lot of

avoidance, a lot of places you couldn't go and probably a lot of paranoia. It was a lot of kind of walking on eggshells."

Improved population numbers mean there's now a buffer for such mistakes and anglers can go to places they haven't fished in years without as much worry, he said.

Key to these changes is

the recovery of the yelloweye rockfish, one of several species of rockfish that were in trouble just 15 years ago.

The combined annual catch limit for the yelloweye will increase from 20 metric tons to 48 metric tons in 2019, although regulators could begin to make adjustments to fishing restrictions when the catch approaches 39 metric tons to allow room for error.

Anglers will be able to fish at greater depths and in locations that were previously off-limits. One immediate effect will see fewer fishing boats crowded near the shore where anglers were less likely to net the overfished species.

Several other species of groundfish have already recovered to levels that have allowed greater catch limits. Those species include petrale sole, widow rockfish and canary rockfish.

There are more than 65 species of rockfish off the West Coast from Alaska to California. Some types can live up to 200 years, Cope said, and they give live birth.

John Holloway, a member of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, which recommended the changes, said the increased catch limit will be transformative for the industry.

"This will basically affect all the fishing sectors to some degree or another," he said. "Every fishing sector ... runs up against yellow eye rockfish, including the trawl fleets and all that."

Spout Springs Ski Area parking lot gets modification

Umatilla National
Forest Service

PENDLETON — The Forest Service has issued a new parking configuration for the south parking area at Spout Springs Ski Area along Highway 204, which authorizes overnight parking for trucks and trailers in a portion of the south parking area. The Forest Service modified the south parking area in response to the loss of overnight parking in the north parking area, which was changed to day-use only to alleviate safety concerns raised by the ski area. The changes to the south parking area balance the needs of the ski area with other recreationists that use this portion of the Umatilla National Forest. This alternative parking arrangement was developed with input from the Oregon Department of Transportation, Spout Springs Homeowners Association President Tim Richardson and other interested public.

"We appreciate the Forest Service and ODOT working to come up with a parking solution that works for

all of us," Tim Richardson said in a press release. "I am pleased with the outcome and I think this will serve the variety of public that use this area."

The north and south parking areas are both part of Oregon's Sno-Park program and both sno-parks are utilized by ski area customers and other winter recreationists. The north parking area is within the Spout Springs Mountain Resort Special Use Permit and managed by the ski area under an agreement with ODOT. The south parking area is managed by the Forest Service under a separate agreement with ODOT.

Spout Springs raised safety concerns this fall regarding their ability to obtain liability insurance needed to open for winter operations if overnight parking was allowed in the north parking area. In order to alleviate these safety concerns, the Forest Service agreed to make the north parking area day-use only once Spout Springs opens for the season. Spout Springs has yet to announce an official opening date, but is anticipated

to resume winter operations this year.

"Our objective is to have Spout Springs operate their downhill and cross country operations during the 2018 and 2019 ski season, while providing for the safety of all users," said Walla Walla District Ranger Mike Rassbach in the release. "I hope these parking area changes will allow for a safe and successful winter season for all forest users."

Sno-Park use would continue to be available on a first come-first serve basis for both parking areas and require an ODOT sno-park permit from Nov. 1–April 30. Additional alternative overnight parking for truck/trailers is available at neighboring Sno-Parks, including Morning Creek, Woodland, and Andie's Prairie.

Forest officials will assess the effectiveness of these changes at the end of the season. Comments or concerns regarding the parking area modifications are welcome and can be submitted to Walla Walla District Ranger Mike Rassbach at 509-522-6293 or mrassbach@fs.fed.us.

SKI REPORT

OREGON

Anthony Lakes — Plan to Open 12/15

Cooper Spur — Opening Soon for Snow Sports Fri: 4p-8p; Sat/Sun: 9a-5p; Open Fri-Sun

Mt. Ashland — Wed 6:23 a.m., 1" new, MG, machine groomed, 20-21" base, 20 of 23 trails, 4 of 5 lifts, 87% open, Mon/Thu/Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p; Open Thu-Mon

Mt. Bachelor — Wed 5:42 a.m., powder, machine groomed, 35-41" base, 45 of 101 trails, 800 acres, 4 of 11 lifts, 45% open, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p

Mt. Hood Meadows — Wed 5:06 a.m., 3" new powder, machine groomed, 33-47" base, 45 of 87 trails, 900 acres, 7 of 12 lifts, 52% open, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p

Mt. Hood Skibowl — Wed Opening Soon for Snow Sports, hard packed, 1 of 8 lifts, 13% open, Sat: 11a-10:15p Sun: 11a-5:30p; Sat: 11a-10:15p Sun: 11-5:30p

Timberline — Wed 8:12 a.m., variable, 33-33" base, 4 of 9 lifts, 44% open, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-3p

Washington

49 Degrees North — Reopen 12/14, machine groomed, 14-23" base, Mon/Tue/Fri: 9a-3:30p; Sat/Sun: 9a-3:30p; Open Fri-Tue

Badger Mountain — Opening Soon for Snow Sports

Bluewood — Plan to Open 12/14, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p

Crystal Mountain — Wed 8:17 a.m., powder, machine groomed, 17-26" base, 5 of 57 trails, 5 of 11 lifts, 9% open, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p

Mission Ridge — Wed Reopen 12/14, 1" new, MG, machine groomed, 7-16" base, Fri: 9a-4p, Sat/Sun: 9a-4p; Open Fri-Sun

Mt. Baker — Wed 10:34 a.m., 21" new powder, machine groomed, 63-79" base, 17 of 38 trails, 4 of 8 lifts, 45% open,

Mon-Fri: 9a-3:30p; Sat/Sun: 9a-3:30p

Mt. Spokane — Wed 5:19 a.m., MG, machine groomed, 34-34" base, 12 of 51 trails, 3 of 5 lifts, 24% open, Wed-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p; Open Wed-Sun

Stevens Pass — Wed 6:02 a.m., powder, machine groomed, 34-58" base, 23 of 52 trails, 4 of 10 lifts, 44% open

Summit at Snoqualmie — Plan to Open 12/14

Summit at Snoqualmie Alpental — Plan to Open 12/14 9 new

White Pass — Plan to Open 12/14

Methow Trails — Wed 9:23 a.m., MG, machine groomed, 14-14" base, 52186 miles, Mon-Fri, Sat/Sun

Stevens Pass XC — Opening Soon for Snow Sports

Idaho

Bogus Basin — Wed 8:54 a.m., MG, machine groomed, 22-27" base, 70 of 93 trails, 8 of 11 lifts, 75% open, Mon-Fri: 10a-4:30p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4:30p

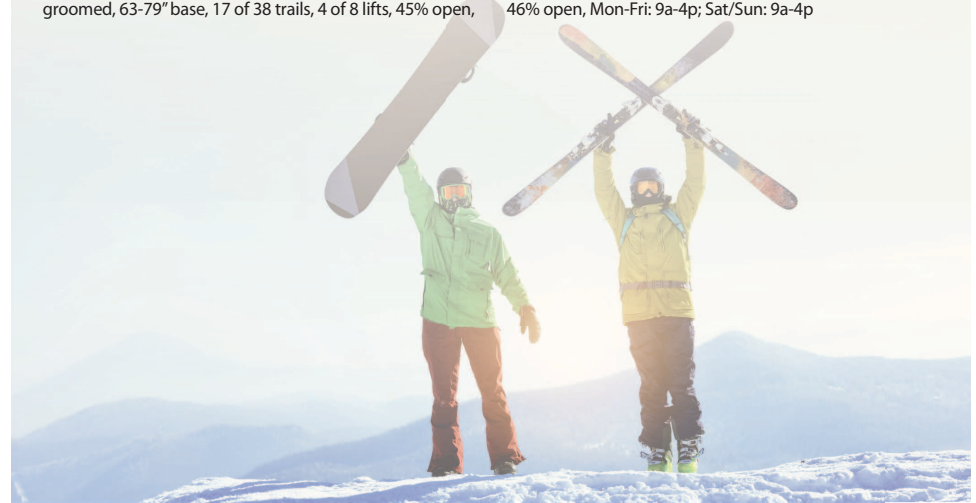
Brundage — Wed 2:51 p.m., powder, machine groomed, 28-29" base, 46 of 51 trails, 1500 acres, 5 of 6 lifts, 90% open, Mon-Fri: 9:30a-4:30p; Sat/Sun: 9:30a-4:30p

Lookout Pass — Wed 5:45 a.m., powder, machine groomed, 23-35" base, 24 of 35 trails, 15 miles, 335 acres, 3 of 4 lifts, 69% open, Mon/Thu/Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p; Open Thu-Mon

Schweitzer Mountain — Wed 9:06 a.m., 3" new powder, machine groomed, 26-36" base, 42 of 92 trails, 1200 acres, 5 of 9 lifts, 46% open, Mon-Fri: 9a-3:30p; Sat/Sun: 9a-3:30p

Sun Valley — Wed 6:00 a.m., packed powder, machine groomed, 25-28" base, 31 of 121 trails, 9 of 17 lifts, 26% open, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p

Tamarack — Wed 6:00 a.m., 1" new powder, machine groomed, 15-24" base, 22 of 48 trails, 440 acres, 3 of 6 lifts, 46% open, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p



People visit a shop near the Church of the Nativity.

AP Photo/Majdi Mohammed

Church: Christians urged to stay in Bethlehem

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children.

But whether the city's efforts can stop the long-term outflow of Bethlehem's Christians remains to be seen. As elsewhere in the Arab world, the local Christian community has struggled for decades, escaping conflict and economic troubles in search of better opportunities abroad.

In the Holy Land, Israel's half-century-old occupation of the West Bank and east Jerusalem, and more than a decade of rule by the Islamic militant group Hamas in Gaza have significantly worsened the situation.

A 2017 census in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem counted just under 47,000 Palestinian Christians, or about 1 percent of a Palestinian population of close to 4.8 million. Twenty years

earlier, Christians still made up more than 1.7 percent of the Palestinian population, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

Roughly half of Palestinian Christians live in the Bethlehem area, where their share of the population has also declined significantly.

Wadie Abunassar, a senior adviser to church leaders in the Holy Land, said the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank has treated Christians well, but that lack of progress toward a resolution with Israel and Palestinian statehood have driven emigration.

Despite lack of hope, he urged Christians to stay.

"This is our homeland. We are called to be witnesses for Jesus in his homeland," he said. "This is a great privilege, which most Christians in the world don't have."