



Pacific Fishery Management Council **NEWS RELEASE**

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Cowcod Stock South of 40°10' N lat. Successfully Rebuilt

BOISE, IDAHO – An important West Coast groundfish stock that was formerly overfished has now been rebuilt ahead of schedule, the Pacific Fishery Management Council announced today. The cowcod (*Sebastes levis*) stock south of 40°10' N. latitude has been managed under a strict rebuilding plan that has severely constrained West Coast fisheries in California for two decades. Rebuilding cowcod was achieved through large area closures, non-retention rules, and very low allowance for incidental bycatch. “This is a remarkable accomplishment,” said Council Chair Phil Anderson. “The Council’s perseverance, adherence to scientific advice, and partnering with the commercial and recreational stakeholders resulted in the rebuilding of this important groundfish species.”

Cowcod, prized by both California recreational and commercial fishermen, were declared overfished and placed under rebuilding measures in 2000. They are a long-lived, slow-growing species, prone to protracted rebuilding progress. Under the original rebuilding plan, the stock was expected to rebuild by 2090. Improved science and understanding of this stock’s population dynamics allowed the Council’s management measures to rebuild much quicker than originally anticipated.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council, National Marine Fisheries Service, and fishing industry stakeholders have collaborated successfully to rebuild overfished West Coast groundfish stocks. Cowcod is the ninth West Coast groundfish stock to rebuild through stringent management measures, leaving yelloweye rockfish as the only Federally-managed groundfish stock managed under a rebuilding plan.

Process

The cowcod assessment was developed by scientists at National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Fisheries Science Center and was reviewed by a stock assessment review panel, which includes independent scientists, and endorsed by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. New harvest specifications and regulations informed by this assessment are expected to be put in place beginning in 2021.

Council Role

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 for the purpose of managing fisheries 3-200 nautical miles offshore of the U.S. coastline. The Pacific Council recommends management measures for fisheries off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington.

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On the Web

- Photo of cowcod (Wikipedia): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sebastes_levis
- Pacific Fishery Management Council: <http://www.pcouncil.org>
- Draft cowcod stock assessment: https://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/H5_Att9_Cowcod_2019_Full_E-Only_SEPT2019BB.pdf