



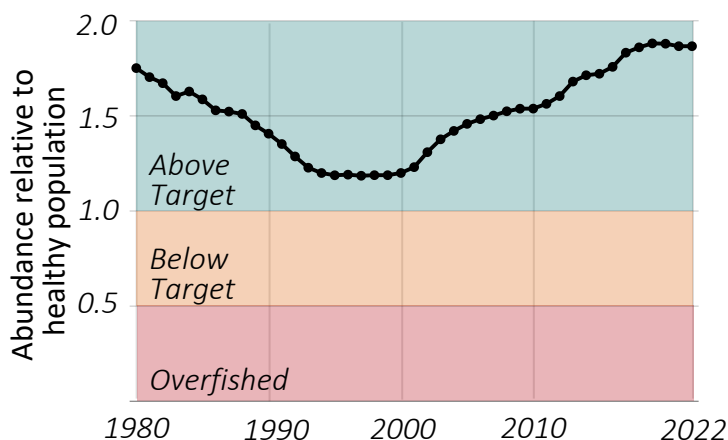
FISH

California Coast and Ocean Report *Status, Progress, and What's Ahead* 2026

California's ocean waters are home to almost 600 species of fish. From the salmon that California Native American tribes have harvested for thousands of years to the iconic great white shark. In addition to playing a key role in coastal and marine ecosystems, fish support coastal economies through commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing and are a critical food source for millions of Californians. Strict environmental protections and sustainable fisheries management help keep California's fish populations some of the healthiest in the world. This indicator focuses on the ecological status of California's fish based on abundance; a separate indicator explores the health of commercial fisheries across the state.

STATUS

Most fish species in California have healthy, abundant populations. This includes species that are commonly commercially harvested in California. **Fluctuations in fish populations are generally caused by natural changes in ocean conditions**, though increased fishing pressure and climate-related impacts, such as kelp loss, can cause declines in fish abundance.



Change in average abundance of 45 fish species compared to healthy population targets over time.

PROGRESS

Decades of science-based catch limits, California's statewide network of marine protected areas, and habitat restoration have brought **dozens of species back from the brink of collapse**, including several rockfish populations that were severely overfished in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, many of **California's fish populations are among the healthiest and most carefully managed in the world.**

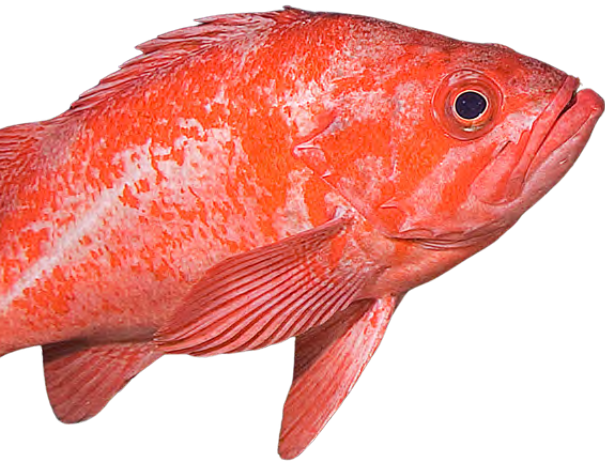
LOOKING AHEAD

Many fish species, including more than half of commercially harvested species, are **vulnerable to climate change impacts such as ocean warming, ocean acidification, and hypoxia.** Continued support for **scientific research and monitoring**, and ongoing investments to **conserve and restore coastal and marine ecosystems**, will be critical to minimize negative impacts to fish and fisheries.

FISH SPOTLIGHTS

SARDINES AND ANCHOVIES

Sardines and anchovies are important fisheries in California and serve as a major food source for tunas, salmon, seabirds, and marine mammals. Sardines and anchovies experience alternating boom-and-bust cycles driven by natural changes in ocean conditions.



VERMILION ROCKFISH

The vermilion rockfish is one of the most desirable targets for recreational fishermen. Though overfishing led to major declines in populations of rockfishes during the 1980s and 1990s, sustainable fisheries management – including catch limits, closures, and ongoing scientific monitoring – has helped rockfish recover in California.

GARIBALDI

The bright orange Garibaldi, California's State Marine Fish, is a distinctive species often spotted by divers in Southern California's kelp forests and rocky reefs. Male Garibaldi cultivate and guard small "gardens" of red seaweed for their nests, creating unique patchy mosaics across the rocky seafloor. Take of Garibaldi is prohibited throughout California.



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