

## Focus on the Bay: Ocean Fishing 2008

In early April, emergency action was taken by fishery management agencies to close the ocean salmon fisheries in California. This emergency action occurred because the number of Fall Chinook salmon that are expected to return to spawn in the Sacramento River in 2008 is far below what is needed to sustain the population. Managers decided to shut down the commercial and recreational ocean salmon fishery for all of California and most of Oregon in 2008 to aid the recovery of Sacramento River Fall Chinook salmon. NOAA Fisheries Service acting assistant administrator said, "It's a tough decision, but the condition of the salmon fishery forces us to close most of it to ensure healthy runs of this valuable fish in the future." Although the reasons for the sudden decline of the fishery are not completely understood, NOAA scientists suggest that unusual ocean conditions in 2005, affecting food sources for juvenile salmon entering the ocean that year, probably caused poor survival of salmon that would have comprised this year's fishery. Also, the chronic problems of loss of freshwater habitat for salmon spawning and rearing, and the withdrawal of Sacramento River water, making it more difficult for juvenile salmon to reach the ocean, has made salmon populations more susceptible to the occasional poor ocean conditions. The decision to close salmon fisheries this year will have a tremendous impact on the economies of small fishing ports along the West Coast. NOAA economists are projecting a loss of \$60 million in personal income associated with commercial and recreational trip expenditures from the loss of commercial and recreational harvest. These estimates do not reflect the effect the loss of the 2008 season will have on businesses providing equipment to processors, boat repair services, or selling boats and fishing gear to recreational fishermen. You can learn more about salmon issues by going to the Department of Fish and Game website: [www.dfg.ca.gov/news/issues/salmon/](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/news/issues/salmon/)

Ocean fishing by boat for most species other than salmon opened May 1. Some of the groups of ocean species caught include rockfishes, cabezon, greenlings, flatfishes, perches, smelt, striped bass, and Dungeness crabs. Visit [www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mapregs4.asp](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mapregs4.asp) to learn more about the species and regulations. Shore fishing is popular for smelts, perches, striped bass, and some flatfishes. Go to [www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/surfperchid.pdf](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/surfperchid.pdf) to see common perches caught here. Sport fishing for lingcod, greenlings, cabezon, and rockfishes is the most popular boat fishery other than salmon. About 30 species of rockfish are typically caught in this area, many of which are caught in shallow water. Rockfishes are a diverse and oddly shaped group of fishes. The Department of Fish and Game provides brochures that show some of these colorful fishes ([www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/rockfishid.asp](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/rockfishid.asp) and [www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/fishid2008.pdf](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/fishid2008.pdf)).