

Your Guide to Recreational Lobster Season in California

OCTOBER 2, 2026 - MARCH 17, 2026

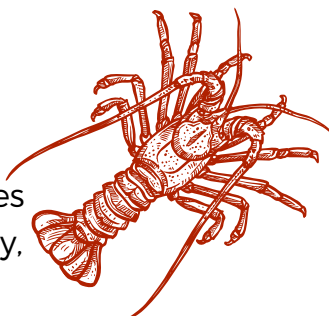


THE CALIFORNIA SPINY LOBSTER

The **California spiny lobster** (*Panulirus interruptus*) is a distinct, clawless crustacean found in the rocky reefs and kelp forests of the eastern Pacific, ranging from Monterey Bay, California, south to Baja California, Mexico. As a nocturnal forager, this reddish-brown predator plays a vital role in the nearshore ecosystem, notably by preying on sea urchins, which helps to maintain the health and balance of California's iconic kelp forests.

RECREATIONAL LOBSTER SEASON

In California, the recreational CA spiny lobster season opens at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, **October 2, 2026** and closes at 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, **March 17, 2026**.



REQUIRED LICENSES

To catch lobsters in California you must have a **California Sport Fishing License** and a **CDFW Spiny Lobster Report Card**, this includes kids too!



**Scan for
license and
report card**

You must have **both documents on your person or boat when catching lobster.**

These report cards must be **turned in by April 30th 2027** by mail to:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Lobster Report Card
3883 Ruffin Rd.
San Diego, CA 92123



**Scan for
online
reporting**

OR online, via the California Department of Fish and Wildlife website



WHERE TO CATCH LOBSTERS IN CALIFORNIA

You can catch a lobster anywhere along the coast of CA that does not lie in a **Marine Protected Area** (MPA). These MPAs protect and restore ocean habitats and increase the health, productivity, and resilience of ocean ecosystems.

Scan this QR code to access CDFW's Ocean Sport Fishing Interactive Web Map.



HOW TO CATCH A LOBSTER

The only legal ways to catch a lobster are using a **hoop net** or your **hands**.

- All **skin and scuba divers** can only use their hands to take lobsters.
- If fishing from a **public pier**, you must use up to 2 hoop nets.
- If fishing from a **vessel**, you may possess up to 5 hoop nets, but the total number of hoop nets on the vessel cannot surpass 10, despite the number of people on board.

CALIFORNIA LOBSTER FISHING REGULATIONS

- Each individual can only have **7 lobsters** in their possession at a time
- The lobster you catch has to be at **least three and one-fourth inches long**, measured in a straight line on the midline of the back from the rear edge of the eye socket to the rear edge of the body shell.
- When measuring you are required to use a **lobster gauge measurement tool**. Scan the QR code for visual measuring methods.



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