

Puget Sound Commercial Shellfish Rules Proposals

Fish Committee Meeting

February 17, 2022

Chris Eardley, Puget Sound Shellfish Policy Coordinator
Aaron Dufault, Puget Sound Shellfish Manager



Introduction

Proposed updates to Chapters 220-320, 220-340, and 220-352

Proposals affect dive fisheries (sea urchin, sea cucumber, scallop); crab; shrimp; crawfish; squid; octopus; razor clams.

Proposals seek improved efficiency and utility for managers and enforcement, flexibility for commercial fishing, alignment with co-management agreements and conservation objectives, tools for emerging issues, and to address housekeeping needs.

Seeking to promulgate many provisions already effected with emergency rules to permanent WAC



Background

Staff proposing a comprehensive update to all Puget Sound commercial shellfish rules, a need

Since last updates, we have learned more about populations; fisheries, harvest practices, and patterns have evolved; newer technologies have emerged; new challenges and new ideas; and co-management has evolved.

As many proposals initiated by emergency regulation, few surprises to stakeholders; some proposals originated or collaboratively-developed with stakeholders

Direct engagement with fishers in addition to standard process elements



Dive fisheries

Puget Sound Shellfish Program (Program) manages scallop, sea cucumber, sea urchin, and geoduck (with DNR) fisheries.

Proposals reflect or support:

- Better understanding of biology and populations (districting, size limits, closed areas);
- Improved catch accounting (fishing week, quick reports)
- Safety considerations (health testing, two divers in the water)
- Enforcement (standardized signage, closed areas)



Dive fisheries

What to expect:

Many proposals previously effected by emergency regulation, few surprises to stakeholders; some proposals originated or collaboratively-developed with stakeholders.

Possible questions: None expected

Public comments to date:

1. Neutral: Request permitting two fishers to harvest on a single cucumber license



Crab fisheries

Program manages crab fisheries, including Dungeness crab.

Proposals reflect or support:

- Updates to obsolete provisions (remove some closure/restricted areas, update pot limits);
- Improved catch accounting/sharing (update geographical units, new reporting requirements);
- Safety considerations (pot barging);
- Enforcement (clarify buoy and tag regulations, new reporting requirements, standardize fishing times);
- Flexibility, clarity for fishers (short-term storage, pot barging, license stacking);
- New management tools/needs (remove defined season dates, buoy color registration*)



Crab fisheries

What to expect:

Many proposals previously effected by emergency regulation, few surprises to stakeholders; some proposals originated or collaboratively-developed with stakeholders.

*One proposal is new since submission of CR-102: registration of buoy color requirement

- Existing requirement on coast, substantial fisher overlap
- Existing buoy brand number registration requirement
- Not overly burdensome
- Conducting dedicated stakeholder engagement now

Possible questions: buoy colors, short-term storage of crab

Public comments to date: None on crab proposals



Shrimp fisheries

Program manages spot shrimp (pot) fishery, and non-spot shrimp (pot and trawl) fisheries.

Proposals reflect or support:

- Updates to obsolete provisions (spot shrimp minimum size);
- Management plan agreement (harvest depth restrictions, time-area restrictions for trawl);
- Improved catch accounting/sharing (update geographical units, new reporting requirements);
- Regulation streamlining and conservation (remove spot shrimp size limit, add minimum pot mesh sizes, define maximum pot dimensions);
- Enforcement (Update buoy marking, reporting requirements);
- Flexibility, clarity for fishers (concurrent [limited] spot/non-spot pot deployment)



Shrimp fisheries

What to expect:

Many proposals previously effected by emergency regulation, few surprises to stakeholders; some proposals originated or collaboratively-developed with stakeholders.

Possible questions: Concurrent spot/non-spot pot deployment, trawl commentary (see comment 3 below)

Public comments to date: 3

1. Opposed to requirement to label groundline buoys with number of pots: Concerned maintaining accurate pot count on buoy markings is challenging, suggests considering alternatives.
2. Neutral: Requests shrimp logbooks be available in carbon-copy booklet
3. Supportive of creating new WAC section for trawl fishery, describes concerns with habitat/bycatch impacts of trawl fishery and suggests excluding trawl from SJI and Bellingham Bay.



Other fisheries

Program manages squid and crawfish fisheries, Coastal Program manages razor clams.

Proposals reflect or support:

- Updates to obsolete provisions (accommodate LED technology for squid, update gear types for razor clams);
- Management plan agreement (remove drag seine as squid gear type);
- Improved catch accounting/sharing (new reporting requirements for squid);
- Regulation streamlining (simplify shoreline setback provision for squid);
- Enforcement (Update crawfish buoy construction and marking requirements)



Other fisheries

What to expect:

Some proposals previously effected by emergency regulation

Possible questions: None anticipated.

Public comments: None on squid, crawfish, or razor clam proposals



Housekeeping changes

Minor updates throughout the chapter to format, streamline, and update language; reorganize chapters to improve structure; removes obsolete sections; and improves geographical descriptions.

- Changes do not affect, nor alter current fishing regulations
- Includes updates to shellfish classifications according to latest taxonomy and convention.
- Updates geographical descriptions to include coordinates in Decimal Degree format.



Questions

