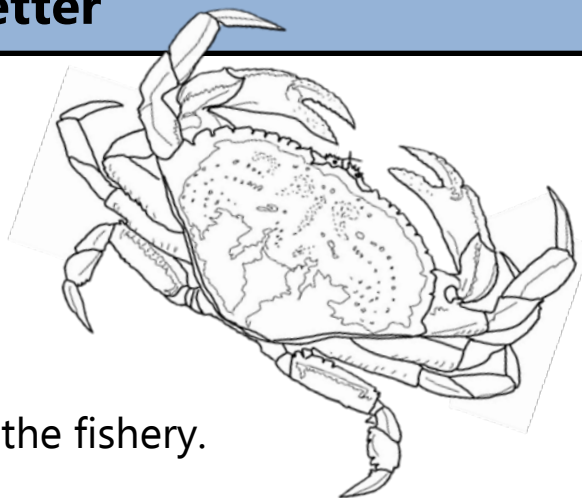




First Edition
**Washington Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery
 Newsletter**

Welcome to the first edition of the Washington State Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery Newsletter. Inside you will find information important to crabbers, processors and others interested in the fishery.



**2021-2022 Season Sets
 Record Ex-Vessel Value
 of \$88.2 million!**



**2021-2022 Pounds Landed
 Second Highest in a Decade!**

Where to find it!

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See webpage for more details and information:
<https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal>



F/V Rememberence, Chinook, WA.

2021-2022 SEASON SUMMARY

Off Washington’s coast, the Dungeness crab resource supports fisheries for four treaty tribes, the Quinault Indian Nation, Quileute Tribe, Hoh Tribe and Makah Tribe, north of Point Chehalis, and a coastwide state fishery. Landings in the 2021-2022 state coastal Dungeness crab fishery totaled 15.3 million pounds. Coastal tribal landings totaled 3.4 million pounds for a total of 18.7 million pounds landed into Washington ports (Figure 1). The 2021-2022 landings were the second highest season total in the last 10 seasons. The ex-vessel value of state landings equated to \$88.2 million (Figure 2). This was the highest grossing season on record, surpassing the previous season high of \$52.4 million in 2020-2021 within the first eight weeks of the season. The average price per pound for the entire season was \$5.78, with a peak at \$7.35 in May. In total, 199 license holders made 4,599 landings into Washington both of which are above the 10 year average.

The 2021-22 season opened for the state fleet from Klipsan Beach, WA to Point Arena, CA, including Willapa Bay on December 1, 2021. The area from Klipsan Beach to Destruction Island opened to state fishers on January 11, 2022, and the area between Destruction Island and the U.S./Canada Border opened on January 15, 2022. Traditional fair-start provisions were implemented and delayed the time when vessels that participated in the area south of Klipsan Beach could move into the areas to the north once they opened (Figure 3).

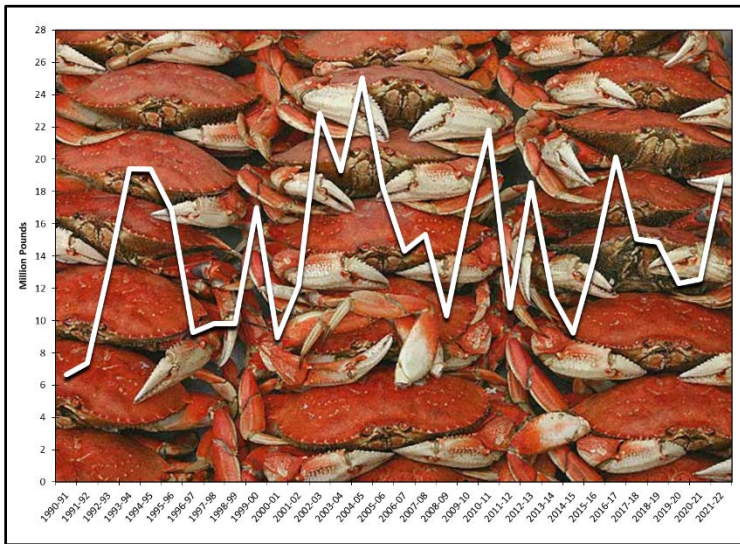


Figure 1. Coastal Tribes and State Combined Landings, 1990/91 – 2021/22.

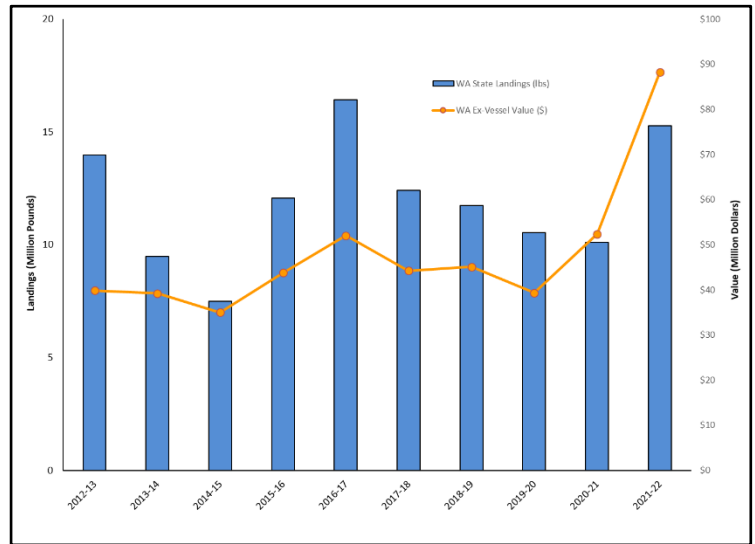


Figure 2. Coastal State Landings and Ex-vessel value, 2012-2022.

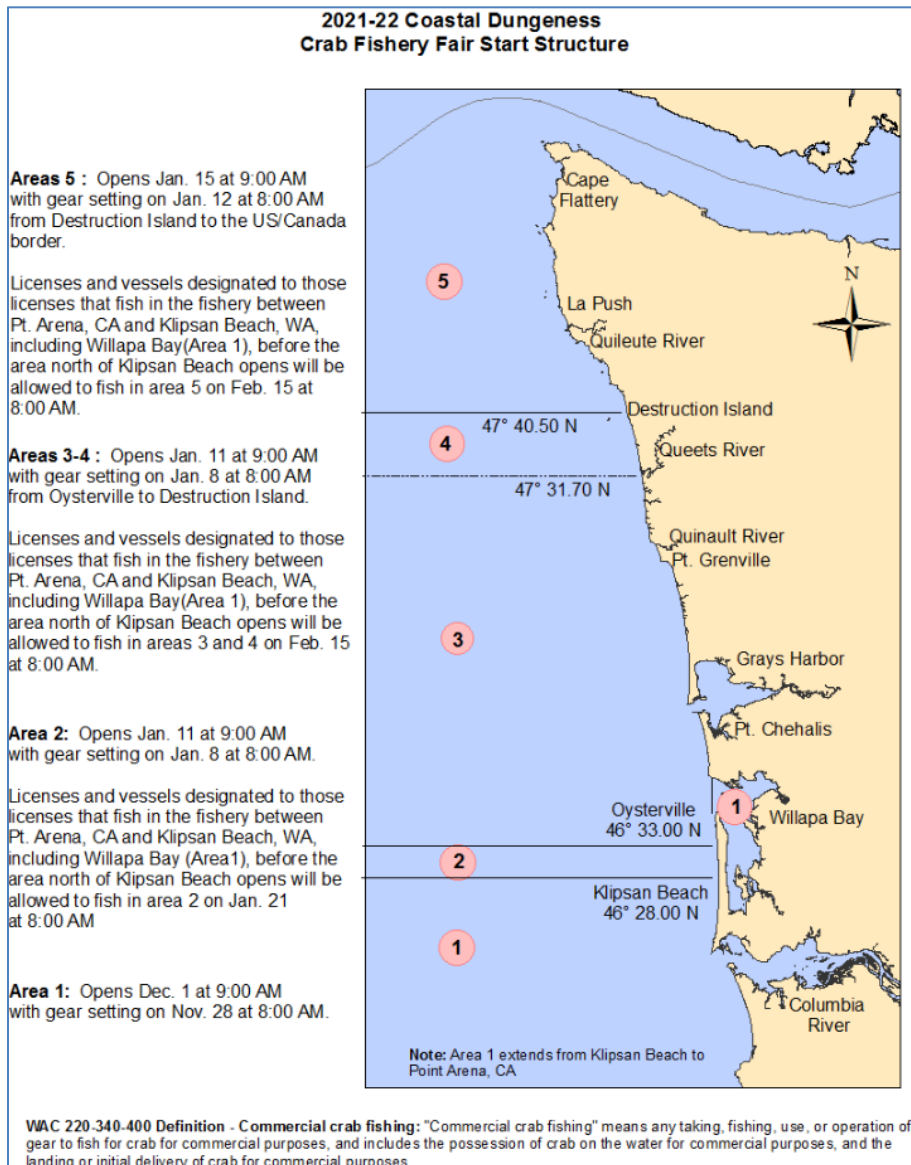


Figure 3. 2021-2022 Fair Start Season Opening Structure

CO-MANAGEMENT

Each year, WDFW works with the Makah Tribe, Quileute Tribe, Hoh Tribe, and the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) to develop harvest management agreements for the upcoming season. The details of those agreements include provisions such as head-starts for the smaller tribal fleets and special management areas (SMA) that are closed to state fishers.

WDFW worked with each of the tribes to finalize harvest management agreements for the 2021-2022 season. The management measures in place per the 2021-2022 agreements were the same as those implemented the past several seasons. The Hoh Tribe did not anticipate active participation in the fishery in 2021-2022, hence no management plan was needed.

Catch information is shared regularly between tribal and state shellfish managers and historical catch is used to estimate projected harvest sharing as the season progresses. State catch data is posted to the WDFW commercial Dungeness crab webpage in a way that seeks transparency but is consistent with confidentiality standards.

Makah

The 2021-2022 Makah-State agreement included an SMA that was in place from Tatoosh Island to Norwegian Memorial. A pot limit was implemented when the SMA opened to state fishers. Crab abundance has been sporadic in the Makah U&A in recent years which has impacted Makah participation.

Quileute

The 2021-2022 Quileute-State agreement included a delayed opening north of Destruction Island until January 15th. Per the agreement, opening this area could be delayed further if the Quileute fleet did not have twenty fishable days prior to January 15. Fishable days were evaluated by Quileute and State managers using agreed to criteria. The Quileute U&A extends south of Destruction Island to the Queets River.

Quinault

The 2021-2022 Quinault-State agreement included a head start for QIN fishers in the area between Point Chehalis and Destruction Island. This provision facilitates sharing. Early catch by the Quinault fleet provides a proxy for crab abundance that is used to determine the number of head start days on a sliding scale.

Historical catch has shown that in years of high abundance, the state fleet can catch more than 50 percent of the harvest; alternatively, in years of low abundance, the state fleet can struggle to catch 50 percent by the end of the season. On March 4, 2022, WDFW managers expanded the size of the SMA when early season catch confirmed a high abundance of crab which increases the chance that the state would catch more than 50 percent of the crab in the Quinault U&A by the end of the season. The SMA as revised remained in place through the end of the season.

Makah, Quileute, Hoh, Quinault, and WDFW co-managers have finalized harvest management agreements for the 2022-2023 season. These management agreements include the same management provisions in place at the beginning of last season. The Hoh Tribe is a new participant in the coastal Dungeness crab fishery with plans to have one vessel participate in the upcoming fishery. Details of the 2022-2023 SMA's will be provided in an industry letter.



NEW RULES IN 2022-2023

ELECTRONIC FISH TICKETS “ETIX” AND “WATIX”

Electronic catch reporting streamlines the reporting process and reduces the time between a landing and when catch data is available to fishery managers. As of October 1, 2022, electronic fish ticket reporting is mandatory for all deliveries of coastal (and Puget Sound) state commercial Dungeness crab, pink shrimp, coonstripe shrimp, sidestripe shrimp, and spot shrimp into Washington ports.

Etix has been used by most coastal buyers to submit electronic fish tickets prior to October 1 voluntarily. WaTix is a new WDFW application for completing electronic fish tickets via a web application or a mobile app. WaTix allows buyers that may not have access to a computer at the time of delivery to complete and submit an electronic fish ticket using a cell phone or tablet, including collecting electronic signatures.



Visit our website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/wa-tix> for information on signing up for WaTix, as well as reference materials for how to use WaTix and how to fill out a fish ticket. For questions regarding WaTix or for help getting signed up, contact user support at watixsupport@dfw.wa.gov or 360-480-1675.

For dealers interested in signing up for Etix, visit <https://etix.psmfc.org/Account/RequestNew> to request an account. You will also need to contact Heidi Rutherford at Heidi.Rutherford@dfw.wa.gov to request a series of fish ticket numbers to input into your Etix account.

BUOY REGISTRATION

WDFW regulations ([WAC 220-340-430 \(5\) \(d\)](#)) **REQUIRE** that license owners register one unique buoy color scheme with WDFW for each coastal crab license. The process for registering buoy colors has been updated through a new online registration form. To be in compliance with WDFW regulations, all license owners must complete the registration form prior to the start of the 2022-2023 season, even if you previously submitted buoys photos.

The registration form requires you to use a smartphone or tablet to take photos of your buoys. It does not allow picture files to be uploaded from your computer. To access the form on your phone and register your buoys, scan the QR code or visit <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/1a6ae9a42a7342d4884f63a089968aa9>.



If you do not have a smartphone or are unable to complete the survey on your own, WDFW staff will be available to assist you. Contact Jamie Fuller at 360-580-0875 or Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov to set up a time for us to assist you or bring your buoys to the Montesano office.

If you have not registered your buoy color pattern yet or if your buoy color pattern has changed, please contact WDFW prior to submitting your information to verify that your color scheme is not already registered to another license. **As a reminder, buoy colors are registered to the license not the vessel. If you designate your vessel to a different license, the buoy color scheme must be re-registered through the registration form to align with the current license number.**

CATCH AREA REPORTING

In early 2022, a significant number of fish tickets were revised for incorrectly reported catch areas. Accurate data is vitally important and errors should be corrected, however, the number of revisions was significant and caused a great deal of uncertainty which impacted our understanding of tribal and state fishery catch sharing. WDFW fishery managers rely on accurate catch data by area from fish tickets to characterize fishery patterns and evaluate harvest sharing throughout the season. **As a reminder, [WAC 220-52-040](#) requires accurate reporting of catch from all areas at the time of landing.** If crab is caught in multiple catch areas for a single landing, fishers must provide an amount of crab caught in each area to the buyer.

Catch area information entered on fish tickets should **ONLY** be provided by the fisher. Buyers should not assume where a vessel fished based on previous trips or use hold inspection numbers to determine catch areas. Hold inspection numbers do not indicate specific catch areas and are only used by fishery managers to monitor fair start provisions.

To assist crabbers and dealers, WDFW developed and distributed a catch area map (Figure 4). The map outlines both logbook areas and fish ticket catch areas including the north and south boundaries of each area. Note that the boundaries of fish ticket areas align with the boundaries of logbook catch areas except in catch area 59A-1. This fish ticket area was divided into logbook areas 1-3, to provide fishery managers with catch data in areas where the Makah and Quileute U&A's overlap. Fish ticket areas should be used to record catch area on fish tickets. Logbook areas should be used when filling out your logbook.

How to Participate in Dungeness Crab Fishery Management

The Coastal Dungeness Crab Advisory Board recommends actions to WDFW designed to support sustainable fishing opportunities for the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery. The board is comprised of 15 members and serve two-year terms that are renewable. The next call for board member nominations will be in the spring of 2024.

Each year WDFW hosts public meetings to share information and seek input from crab industry participants. These meetings are announced via, letters to license holders and alternate operators, our industry email list and our mass no-reply text list and are posted to our web page (see page 19). Your feedback on management actions and input on fishery logistics is valuable as managers address and respond to evolving management needs.

WDFW Coastal Dungeness Crab Fish Ticket and Logbook Areas

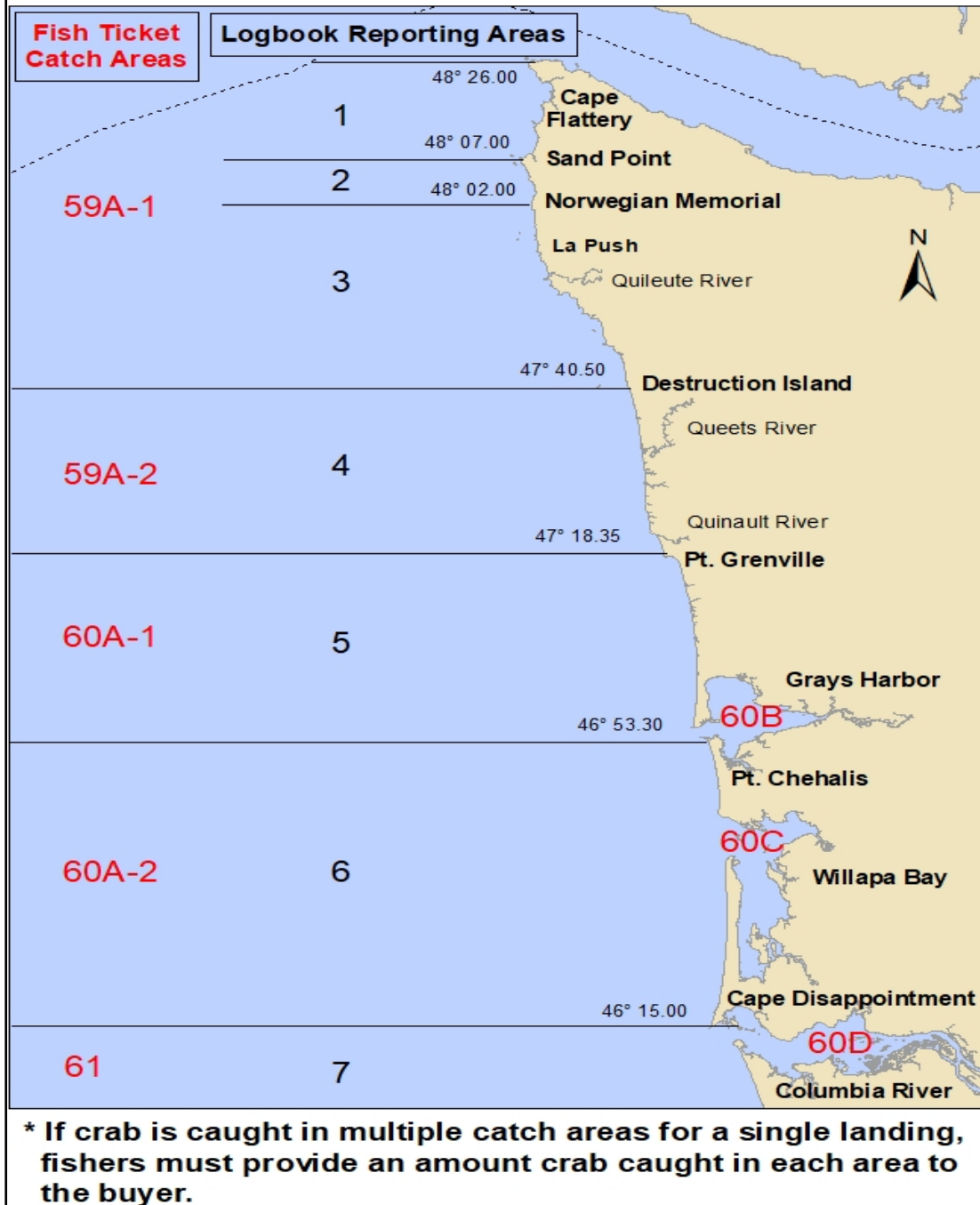


Figure 4. Washington Catch Area Map. Fish ticket catch areas are shown in **RED** and logbook fishing areas are shown in **BLACK**.

PROPOSED RULE CHANGES FOR 2023-2024

ELECTRONIC MONITORING

Electronic monitoring (EM) is a valuable tool that is necessary to modernize management of the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery. Fleetwide implementation of EM will improve the accuracy and timeliness of fishing location data which is needed to effectively:

- Meet co-management responsibilities
- Improve enforcement of closed area boundaries, pot limits, and gear tampering
- Track co-occurrence of fishing gear and marine mammal activity necessary for marine life conservation
- Support more flexible management when biotoxins are high



Figure 5. An installed LIME unit

Since 2021 WDFW has partnered with [Archipelago Marine Research Ltd.](#) to test their Lite Integrated Monitoring Equipment (LIME) system (Figure 5) as part of a proof-of-concept pilot project funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Phase 1 of the project involved installing the LIME units on four vessels and giving each skipper an electronic logbook to record fishing location information.

The project is currently in Phase 2, which includes expanding the participating vessels to twelve and installing hydraulic sensors on every vessel in the project. During this Phase, WDFW will further refine data protocols, test the data flow developed in Phase 1, conduct outreach with the larger fishing community in the region and ensure LIME data is visible to staff through Archipelago's FishVue Fleet visibility tool. WDFW staff plan to use what we have learned from this project and in researching other EM systems to recommend rules for implementing EM in the coastal Dungeness crab fishery.

How EM benefits fishermen:

- Levels the playing field by improving enforcement of gear tampering/theft, pot limits, closed areas, etc.
- Potentially allow for more tribal/state fishing in common
- Potentially end the need for paper logbooks
- Address derelict gear recovery concerns
- Provides summary fishery location data to confront and meet challenges with whale conservation, wind energy and biotoxin monitoring.

Future management of the Dungeness crab fishery will require accurate and timely fishery location data. WDFW will not be able to meet these needs with traditional logbook data and **expects to move forward**

with rulemaking to require EM for the coastal Dungeness crab fishery as soon as the 2023-2024 season. Fishermen are encouraged to contribute to the development of an EM program that meets the needs of both fishermen and fishery managers. For more information contact Robert Morgan: 360-480-8596 robert.morgan@dfw.wa.gov

LINE MARKING

Two line marking rule changes are being considered. The rulemaking process is expected to begin in spring 2023 and will proceed through the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. If approved by the Commission, the anticipated effective date is December 1, 2023.

1. A rule effective December 1, 2020, required line used in the Washington coastal crab fishery to be distinctively marked ([WAC 220-340-430](#)). The rule requires at least 12 inches of line be marked in red in two places, the first no more than one fathom from the main buoy and the second no more than one fathom from the pot (Figure 6). The rule does not specify how the red marks should be accomplished. This was intentional to allow crabbers to test various methods, e.g., paint, tape, tubing, etc. In response to crabber feedback, a change to the current regulation will be considered. **The proposed change inserts the word “continuous” in the regulation language to clarify that the red mark must span the full 12 inches of line.**

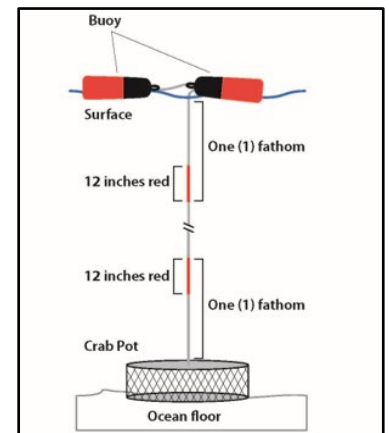


Figure 6. Coastal Dungeness Crab Gear Line Marking Requirements.

2. **A new rule is proposed that will prohibit the use of line markings in the Washington Dungeness crab fishery that are required by another state or fishery.** This change is necessary to ensure that Washington coastal Dungeness crab fishery gear is not inaccurately attributed to another state. This change is key to correctly attributing entanglements to a specific fishery.



To learn why line marking is needed, read the Marine Life Conservation section.

MARINE LIFE CONSERVATION

Federally protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and/or the Endangered Species Act (ESA), large whale and marine turtle species are among those species most impacted by fishing gear entanglements off the West Coast. Entanglements in commercial fishing gear on the US West Coast have increased and commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear makes up the largest portion of identifiable gear (Figure 7). In recent years, WDFW has taken action to reduce the risk of entanglements in the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery:

- In July 2019, implemented an emergency rule to reduce pot limits through the end of the 2019 season
- Adopted in 2020, a permanent rule change reducing pot limits from May 1 through September 15th
- Adopted in 2020, an expanded derelict gear recovery program and a line marking requirement

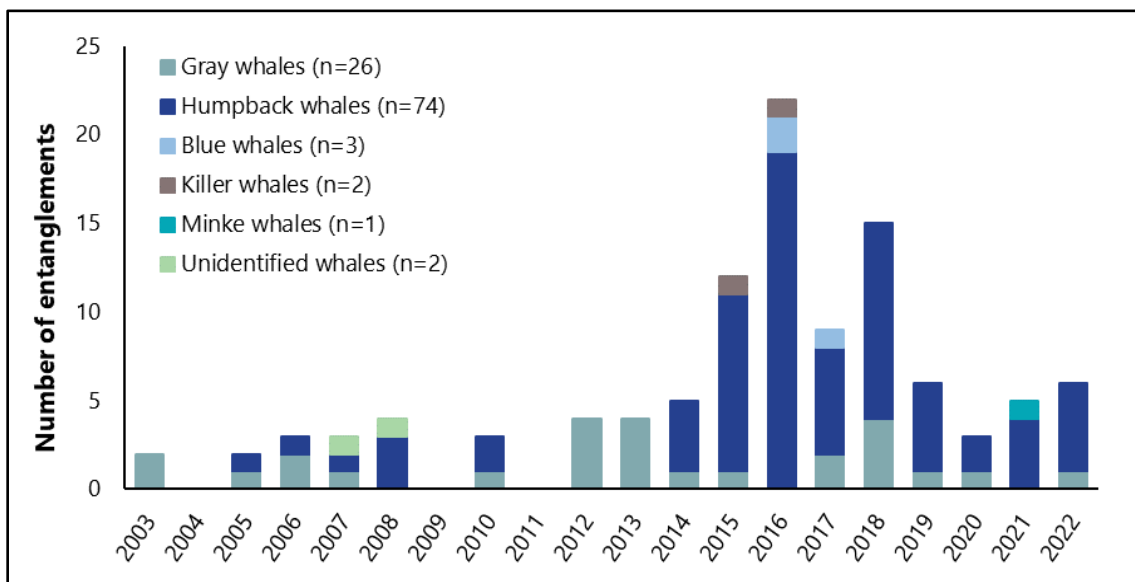


Figure 7. Combined WA, OR and CA Dungeness Crab Fishery Entanglement Record as of 9/30/2022.

INCIDENTAL TAKE PERMIT AND CONSERVATION PLAN

To bring the Washington coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery into compliance with federal regulations, WDFW is taking steps to apply for an incidental take permit (ITP) under Section 10 of the ESA and develop an accompanying Conservation Plan.

The ITP authorizes impacts to ESA-listed species occurring incidental to otherwise lawful activities. The Washington Coastal Dungeness crab Conservation Plan (CP) describes the measures to reduce the risk of marine life entanglements with coastal commercial Dungeness crab gear. The CP represents a long-term strategy for managing the fishery in alignment with WDFW’s mission to provide sustainable harvest in a manner that conserves and protects wildlife populations. Drafting the CP began in the fall of 2019 and is still underway. Submission of a draft CP is planned for 2023.

GEAR MARKING

In addition to reducing the amount of gear in the water, we need **to improve our ability to identify the fishery and gear associated with reported entanglements**. Ultimately, we need to know which fishery entangled gear is from (positive attribution) and to know which fishery the gear isn't from (negative attribution).

To accomplish this, gear marking needs to be robust to make it more likely that identifying markers are readily visible when an animal is entangled. Photos of observed entanglements are often taken in poor conditions, or the marked portion of a buoy is not visible. Gear marking across fisheries is also necessary. As shown in Figure 8, the gear in just over half (50%) of all entanglements cannot be identified to a specific fishery.

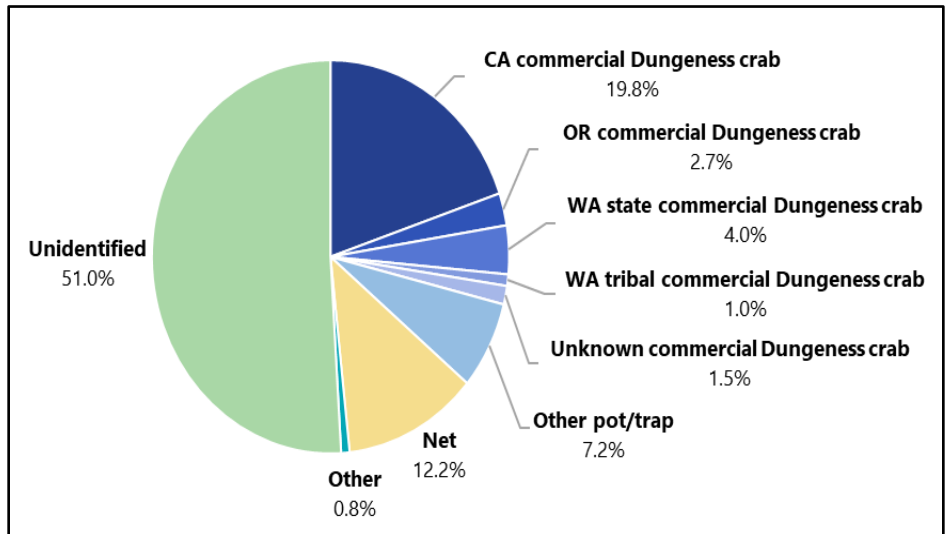


Figure 8. West Coast entanglement record by fishery/gear, 2013-20.

Results from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) line marking analysis highlights the need for gear marking to include multiple marks, more and probably larger marks than Washington coastal regulations currently require, and that line marking should focus on the top and upper portion of gear.

Recent guidance from NMFS has indicated that **applications for ITPs will not be successful without robust line marking requirements**. That guidance also pointed to the [Northeast Lobster and Jonah Crab gear marking regulations](#) as exemplifying likely expectations for line marking schemes which are summarized here:

https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/202203/Gear%20Marking%20Requirements%20March%202022_508.pdf.

Fishery managers have been working to develop a gear marking scheme for West Coast Dungeness crab fisheries, guided by goals established by the Tri-State Line Marking Working Group. Fishery managers also recognize the need to coordinate with federal fixed gear fisheries and in November 2022 participated in the Sablefish Pot Gear Marking Workshop hosted by Oregon Sea Grant. The workshop report can be found at: https://oregonstate.app.box.com/s/w90vnsoxykcrpbooc7l6e2jik8pyzpaf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

The **straw proposal** presented in Figure 9 illustrates some key elements necessary for line marking to be effective. This marking scheme is similar in concept to the one implemented for Northeast Lobster and Jonah crab gear. It is also designed to support expansion to other state fixed gear fisheries such as spot shrimp and hagfish.

- **Size**

Larger marks at the surface are intended to increase the chance that marks can be seen from platforms of opportunity, such as vessels or small planes. Smaller marks along the body of the main line are intended to reduce the burden (materials + labor) for fishers.

- **Color**

Distinct colors between states are intended to improve the likelihood that the state of origin can be distinguished (e.g., avoiding similar colors like red and orange which can be difficult to decipher in photos/videos or after weathering).

- **Number, frequency, and placement**

Sets of marks in the surface system and upper portion of the main line are intended to cover the portion of the gear set that has historically been most likely to be documented and available for potential detection of marks. Sets of marks along the body of the main line are intended to provide identification information when surface gear is not present. Solid marks are intended to increase the chance that marks can be seen from platforms of opportunity, such as vessels or small planes.

Tri-State Line Marking Goals

- Identifiable and accurate
- Visible (primarily in photographs)
- Reasonable and cost-effective
- Coordinated across West Coast Dungeness crab
- Expandable to other fixed gear fisheries
- Environmentally friendly

WHAT IS TRI-STATE?

The Pacific Fisheries Management Council was established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (MSA). The MSA requires the Pacific Council to develop conservation and management measures for the fisheries off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. However, for over 20 years, Section 112(d) of Public Law 104-297 (16 USC 1856) has delegated authority over the West Coast Dungeness crab fishery to the States of Washington, Oregon, and California. Through the work of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission's Coastal **Dungeness crab Tri-State Committee**, this very successful collaborative effort has resolved many complex fishery management issues. The Tri-State Committee is made up of each state's Fish and Wildlife agency Directors, or their designee, and five commercial fishers from each state.

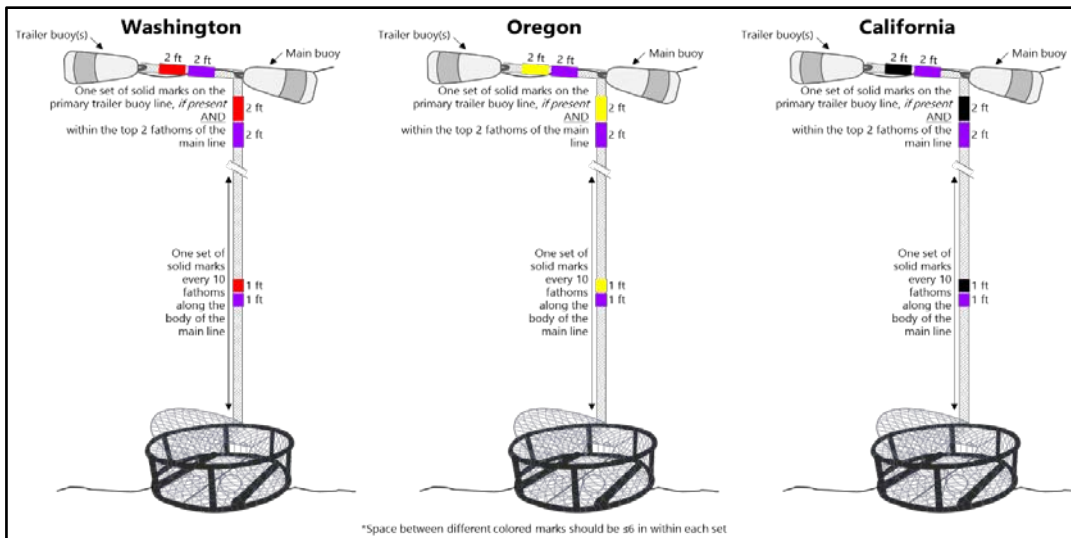


Figure 9. Tri-State DRAFT EXAMPLE of a possible coordinated line marking scheme for West Coast Dungeness crab fisheries. One color represents the state of origin and the other marks represents the fishery: [NOTE: THIS SCHEME HAS NOT BEEN ADOPTED; WDFW IS NOT RECOMMENDING CRABBERS PURCHASE ANY PARTICULAR LINE COLOR AT THIS TIME.]

What next? WDFW will pursue two rule changes in 2023 to advance line marking. However, these rule proposals are only an initial step! Further rule making will occur in stages to facilitate important and necessary collaboration among managing agencies. Advancing in a stepwise manner also allows crabbers to test and share their experience with gear marking as regulations evolve and provide feedback on new proposals. Finally, a stepwise progression provides time to seek funding opportunities that could help defray the cost of transitioning to more extensive gear marking schemes. However, rules are not the only tool. Voluntary actions are vitally important too. Crabbers are encouraged to know and follow **Best Practices!**

BEST PRACTICES

- Remove any fishing gear you are not actively tending during the season and have all gear out of the water by the end of the season (required by law [WAC 220-340-480](#)).
- Minimize scope. Use only the amount necessary to compensate for tides, currents, and weather (required by law [WAC 220-340-430](#)).
- Minimize excess line to avoid floating line at the surface. Floating line should be as limited as practical between the main buoy and trailer buoy(s).
- When changing set location across depths, adjust the length of pot lines by adjusting shots (i.e., measured length of line) to maintain the minimum amount of scope necessary to compensate for the currents and tides.
- Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of whales when possible. Communicate the locations of high whale activity with other fishermen.
- Minimize knots & splices which can get caught up in the baleen.

Comments from crab fishery participants at Summer/Fall 2022 WDFW Workshops

“Consider the amount of gear crabbers must mark compared to other fisheries.”

“Require less marking of crab gear, since we’re first”

“Prefer state-colored line with no or one mark”

“Marking is costly, labor intensive”

“Consider impacts to multi-crab fishery license holders”

DERELICT GEAR RECOVERY PROGRAM

Since 2009, WDFW has issued permits to crab fishers interested in recovering gear in coastal waters off Washington, including the Columbia River, Willapa Bay, and Grays Harbor, from September 16 through October 31 after the close of each commercial crab season. These permits allow fishers to keep the pots they recovered, including pots owned by other Washington State licensed fishers. Gear recovery is prohibited in any tribal SMA closed to state licensed fishers. Gear belonging to tribal fishers cannot be recovered.

In 2020, WDFW implemented an in-season gear recovery period, from May 1 through September 15. Gear recovery is allowed for all state licensed gear not tagged with the current year's summer buoy tag. In-season gear recovery was implemented to remove derelict gear from the water earlier in the year in order to reduce the risk of whale entanglements.

The addition of in-season gear recovery has been very successful, with most of the derelict gear retrieval in the last 3 years occurring during the in-season period. 41 permits were issued this year, 23 of which recovered gear. A total of 656 pots were recovered in 2022, all during the in-season gear recovery period (Figure 10).

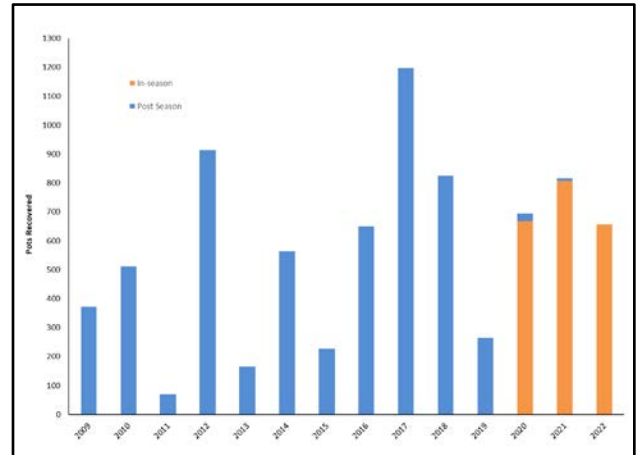


Figure 10. Derelict Gear Recovery, Number of Pots Per Year, 2009 - 2022.



**Derelict Gear Recovery
Program Permit**

To apply for a permit
contact
Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov
or 360-580-0875.

Recent Whale Entanglements Linked to Washington Commercial Dungeness Crab Gear

A **Gray whale** entangled in coastal Washington crab gear was encountered in Alaska in 2022. The gear included line, a remnant of the crab pot, and a 2007-2008 pot tag. The entanglement was reported in Juneau Empire, Saturday, August 20, 2022. [Angoon residents work to free gray whale | Juneau Empire](#)

An entangled **Humpback whale** was successfully disentangled off Puerto Vallarta, Mexico on December 5, 2022, roughly 3000 miles from Washington. The whale was entangled with about 42 feet of line with a buoy marked with a Washington summer crab fishery tag from 2021. Line marking, in the form of a weaved in red line, is visible in the recovered gear. The Mexico whale entanglement response group reported that the juvenile whale was in poor condition, “fully parasited, very weak and emaciated” and “from its shape seems it had been entangled for a long time.”

FISHERY MONITORING

TEST FISHING

WDFW conducts test fishing to determine the percentage of meat recovered from Dungeness crab starting in late October. Testing is conducted aboard two contracted coastal commercial crab vessels following the Tri-State Pre-Season Testing Protocols.



DOCKSIDE SAMPLING

WDFW staff sample crab landings randomly throughout the season. The purpose of this sampling is to ensure that legal size (6.25 inches, 159 mm) crab are being landed and to document crab shell condition during the season. Sampling at each landing consists of measuring carapace widths and determining shell condition grades for 100 legal size crab. Shell condition grades are defined in Table 1.

Table 1. Shell condition grades.

Grades	Description
1A	Hard-shell: Inflexible carapace and leg segments
1B	Hard-shell: Slightly flexible carapace or leg segment (first pair of walking legs)
II	Soft-shell: Moderately flexible carapace and leg segment, bends without breaking
III	Soft-shell: Very flexible carapace and leg segments

Data in Figure 11 represent size of legal-size crab from dockside samples, as well as samples collected during ride-along trips from July through September and samples collected during the test fishery from October through December. If a notable amount of sublegal crab are encountered during dockside sampling, WDFW enforcement will be notified for further investigation.

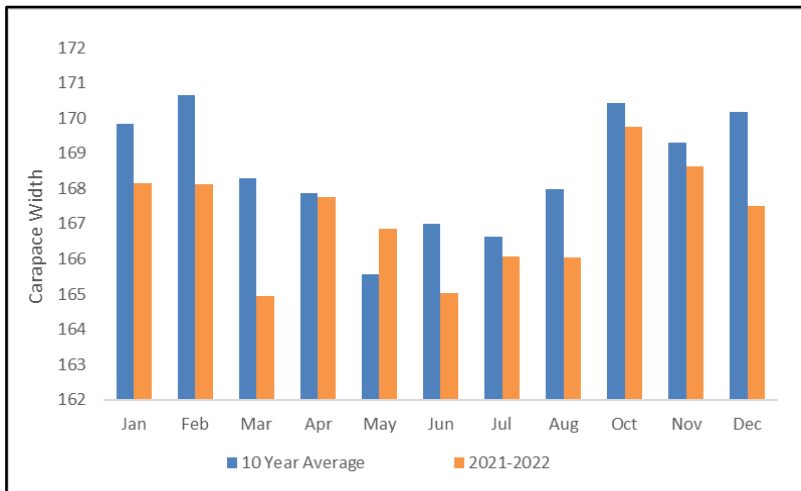
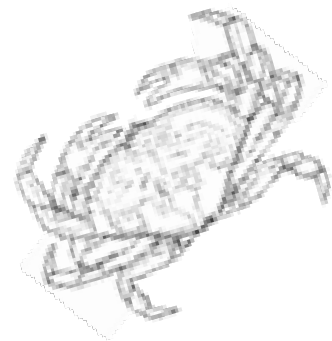


Figure 11. Average size of crab landed by month (carapace width, millimeters), 10-year average and 2021-2022.



SUMMER FISHERY MONITORING

Beginning May 1, pot limits are reduced from 500 and 300 to 330 and 200 respectively, and summer buoy tags are required on deployed gear. The intent of this requirement is to reduce the risk of whales becoming entangled in commercial crab gear by reducing the number of lines in the water during the peak time when humpback whales are present off the Washington coast.



Beginning the first Sunday in July through September 15, provisions of the Summer Fishery Management Plan become effective including a 2,500-pound weekly landing limit. During this period, WDFW conducts crab condition tests every other week via dockside samples, as well as ride-along trips with consenting commercial fishers. The Summer Fishery Management Plan provides protection for soft-shelled crab during the peak male recruitment molt period when they are more susceptible to handling mortality.

If any single shell condition test conducted during a ride-along trip indicates that less than 50 percent of the male crabs sampled are hard-shelled (grades 1A or 1B) or any three shell condition tests conducted during random dockside sampling within a two-week period indicates less than 75 percent of the crab are hard-shelled (grades 1A or 1B), WDFW will impose a 1,200-pound weekly landing limit.

LOGBOOK PROGRAM

Logbooks are an important tool to determine how much crab is being caught in each catch area, including how much catch is coming from each tribal U&A. Please be aware that logbook catch area numbers differ from fish ticket catch area numbers.

Logbook data provides a footprint of the fishery and will help us:

- understand where whales and the fishery overlap which will help managers more effectively implement risk reduction measures in a way that minimizes impacts to fishery participants, and;
- evaluate impacts to the fishery by other ocean uses, like offshore wind areas, as they are considered in areas off the Washington coast.

LOGBOOKS ARE MANDATORY!

Logbooks are **due by the 10th of each month** for the previous month's fishing activity.

Send completed logbooks to:
WDFW
Attn Coastal Dungeness Crab
Manager
48 Devonshire Rd
Montesano, WA 98563

Unfortunately, logbook compliance fleetwide has been declining over the past few years. Only 65 percent were turned in for the 2020-2021 season. Moreover, many logbooks are submitted with missing or poor-quality information. For example, information such as "bay" or "river" in place of coordinates does not provide WDFW with accurate enough information about fishing location. Logbooks are required to be filled out completely and accurately and sent in to WDFW in a timely manner. Managers report noncompliance to WDFW Enforcement.

RECREATIONAL CRAB FISHERY

WDFW's management of the coastal crab fishery has long been focused almost exclusively on the commercial fishery. The agency has not had the staff or budget to make any efforts to generate estimates of recreational harvest.

With increasing interest in coastal recreational crab fishing the agency saw a need to monitor recreational harvest and begin generating seasonal harvest estimates. This information will allow managers to monitor the fishery more effectively and will provide important information to inform tribal/state harvest sharing.

Charlotte Berry-Powell was hired on November 16 to begin work to design an effective and statistically sound sampling plan and will subsequently hire staff who will collect the data needed to generate estimates of Washington's recreational crab harvest in all coastal waters.

ENFORCEMENT

The WDFW Enforcement program has two new officers in Westport. Officer Lanny McOmbler and Officer Chris Dean. Both officers have completed their required training and are actively working in the field.

They also took delivery of their new offshore vessel capable of hauling gear. In the first month of operation, it assisted in catching a crabber running another fisher's gear. This vessel will be out checking line marking and other gear requirements.

In 2021-2022, officers were busy shoreside and on the water doing their best to ensure an orderly fishery and that rules were being followed. The following are a few cases:

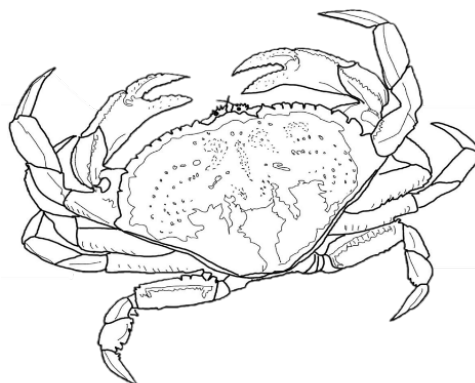
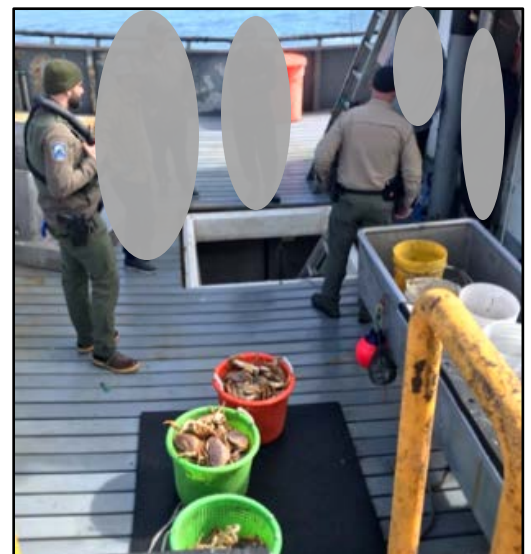


- The big one is the ongoing fish ticket case involving the changing of information. Our special investigation unit will be submitting this case to a prosecutor.
- Officers conducted a visual inspection of a tote of Dungeness crab in Westport and noticed that they appeared undersize. They sorted and measured 3,667lbs of Dungeness crab and found that 40% were below the legal-size limit. The illegal crab was mere minutes away from being shipped to open markets. The officers seized \$11,512.00 of illegal crab. The crab was processed and donated to charitable organizations. Several charges for commercial fishing violations were referred to the Gray's Harbor Prosecutor's Office.

- Officers were on a boat patrol out of Westport checking for compliance with coastal commercial crab regulations when a single unpainted and unbranded set of gear bearing no buoy tag caught their eye. They looked for more evidence of what string it could belong to, finding approximately 20 pots without buoy brands, and all in violation of the rules requiring a unique buoy brand number and uniformity in color scheme. The Officers were able to seize five pots from the string and use the pot tags to further confirm the suspect's identity. The next day one of the officers contacted the individual loading up even more gear and tried to explain there were several issues with his crab gear. His excuse was that his crew could not be watched like a hawk, and he knew the gear was missing buoy tags but continued to fish with them. The commercial crabber was hostile and insisted the Officer ought to have left the gear in the water and give him a "warning." The warning was issued in the form of several criminal charges.



- While checking commercial crab vessels, Officers noticed a bucket of crab on the deck of a vessel that was unloading their gear for the season. The vessel was not set to offload crab until later in the week. The bucket was inspected and found to contain all undersize crab, a second bucket was located and also contained short crab. Officers located three additional buckets of undersize crab hidden on the deck of the vessel. Additionally, a lingcod, and scallops were also found hidden in containers on the deck of the vessel. There was a total of 118 pounds of short crab located and only 3 of the 4 crew members had the required crew licenses. Multiple charges were filed for short commercial crab, no crew license, failure to submit and possession of the lingcod and scallops.



HOW TO STAY UP TO DATE

Each season **many** changes occur in various important aspects of the Washington coastal crab fishery. These can include changes in Special Management Area boundaries or dates, issues with marine toxins, pot limit changes, marine mammal concerns, etc. We communicate these changes using a variety of methods. WDFW distributes important information like emergency regulations with U.S. mail using the address on your license application.

To distribute information more quickly we also use a:

- Coastal Crab email distribution list
- Coastal Crab no-reply text system

You are encouraged to sign up for both by sending your name, email, and cell phone number to Jamie.fuller@dfw.wa.gov or 360-580-0875. You can include members of your crew for both the email and text lists.



Sign Up for Text Alerts

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OF INTEREST TO CRABBERS

WIND ENERGY

At the end of August, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) notified Washington State agencies that Hecate Energy had made public its unsolicited lease request (ULR), called Cascadia Wind. The ULR is for two areas, about 15 miles off Southern Washington for a total of about 403 square miles. The first ULR off Washington was Olympic Wind near Grays Harbor. Olympic Wind's proposal is for two areas more than 40 miles offshore and encompasses 291.9 square miles. BOEM is still reviewing the two ULRs off Washington. BOEM will not post the lease requests to its website until they've completed their review and if BOEM staff determines that both lease requests meet all technical, legal, and financial qualifications. BOEM does not have an estimate for how long it will take to complete their review.

HARMFUL ALGAE AND CRAB

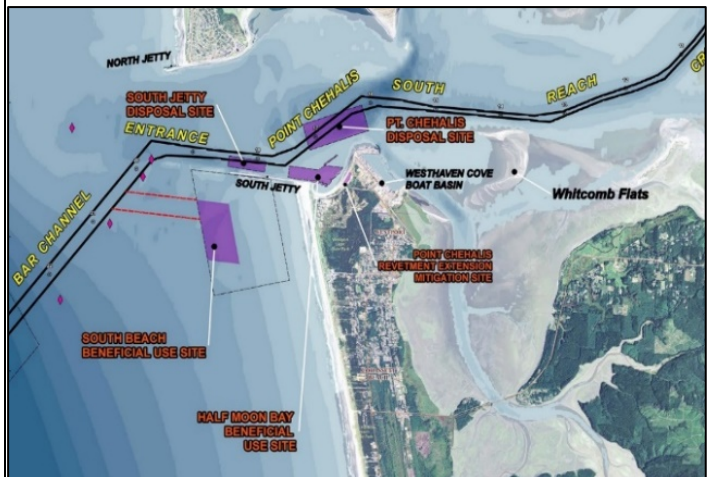
Domoic acid, a naturally occurring toxin produced by certain types of algae, can be harmful or even fatal to humans if contaminated shellfish is consumed. WDFW routinely provides razor clams to the Washington Department of Health (WDOH) to test for domoic acid.

When domoic acid in razor clam tissue rises to higher levels, it is possible that domoic acid will begin to accumulate in the hepatopancreas of Dungeness crab (crab butter). To protect consumers, WDFW works closely with WDOH public health officials to follow the "STRATEGY FOR PREVENTING CONSUMER EXPOSURE TO DOMOIC ACID FROM COASTAL DUNGENESS CRAB". This document is posted on the WDFW web site at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/letters-notices#general-info>

The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires regulatory action on any Dungeness crab in interstate commerce found to contain 30 ppm or more domoic acid in cooked viscera. This regulatory action can include closure of the fishery in areas where crabs are above this threshold or by requiring all crab be cleaned or eviscerated before going to market.

USACE DREDGE PROJECT

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) begins the annual Grays Harbor Outer Harbor Hopper Dredging in April. This past April we received several notifications from USACE of crab pot encounters in the Half Moon Bay Site and the Federal Navigation Channel, which impeded the dredging process and damaged the dredge. Please be mindful of the dredging areas and dump sites, as well as the navigation channels, during this time and keep your crab gear out of these areas to avoid any lost or damaged gear. <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/tow-lane-dredging>



SCIENCE SUPPORTING CRAB FISHERY

A new west-coast study will work in partnership with coastal tribes in northern California, Oregon, and Washington, the commercial Dungeness Crab fishery, and relevant Federal and State agencies to help them be ready to deal with future climate change, by increasing their understanding of how multiple stressors (ocean acidification, hypoxia, harmful algal blooms, and increasing temperatures) are likely to impact Dungeness crabs and the communities dependent on them in the future. More details can be found at <https://nmssanctuarieseus2-uat.azurewebsites.net/news/nov22/stressed-out.html>

TOW BOAT LANES

WDFW and representatives of the crab industry participate in two meetings each year as part of the Sea Grant Commercial Crabber Towboat Lane Agreement Project. This project produces agreements between coastal crabbers in all three west coast states and tow boat and marine shipping industry between San Francisco and Cape Flattery. These agreements define pot-free shipping lanes and ship-free fishing areas. The result is improved safety and reduced costs. For crabbers it protects fishing gear from being lost or damaged. More details, including downloadable files can be found at <https://wsg.washington.edu/community-outreach/outreach-detail-pages/crabbertowboat-lane-agreements-download-charts-data-and-meetings/>.

DAN AYRES HAS RETIRED



After 42 years with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Dan retired on January 31, 2023. Dan was the Coastal Shellfish Program Manager for many years and a vital part of coastal Dungeness crab fishery management, along with the other coastal shellfish fisheries. His many years of experience and knowledge will be greatly missed. We wish Dan a very happy retirement and a huge thank you for all your years of service!

ENFORCEMENT REMINDERS !!!!!

- Register Your Buoy Colors
- Mark Lines with 12" **Continuous Red** Mark!
Red "zip ties" **only** meet the requirements if they are **woven into the line** to create a continuous 12-inch red mark.
- Know The Date and Time for Mandatory Hold Inspections
- Know Special Management Area Boundaries
- Report ACCURATE Catch Area on Fish Tickets
- Submit COMPLETE and ACCURATE Logbook
- Use Summer Buoy Tags after May 1
- Reduce Pots for Summer, May 1: 500 to 330 or 300 to 200
- License Your Crew Member

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/commercial/miscellaneous>

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Our Website:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal>