



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

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February 22, 2024

WASHINGTON COASTAL DUNGENESS CRAB INDUSTRY NOTICE

Pot limit adjustments and Makah SMA opener

The Washington coastal Dungeness crab fishery opened on February 1, 2024, with a coastwide reduced pot limit of 400 or 250 for vessels operating under a license that allow 500 or 300 pots, respectively. Beginning 8:00 AM on March 2, 2024, the following changes will take effect:

1. **South of Pt. Chehalis, WA (46° 53.18 N. Lat.) and north of Destruction Island, WA (47° 40.30 N. Lat.):** Pot limits imposed at the beginning of the season are lifted. Vessels fishing exclusively in these areas may fish their full complement of pots.
2. **Between Pt. Chehalis, WA (46° 53.18 N. Lat.) and Destruction Island, WA (47° 40.30 N. Lat.), including Grays Harbor:** A pot limit of 400 or 250 remains in effect until further notice. For vessels that choose to fish within this area, a pot limit of 400 or 250 will apply to all gear fished by that vessel, regardless of area.
3. **The Makah Special Management Area (SMA):** The Makah SMA is scheduled to open to state fishers at 8:00 AM on March 2, 2024. A 200-pot limit for state vessels will be in effect until 8:00 AM on April 1, 2024. Fishers must register with WDFW 24 hours prior to deploying gear in this area. See the SMA section of this notice for additional details.

Vessels that fish within the Quinault U&A cannot place remaining pots outside of that area. For example, a vessel with a 500-pot license can only set 400 pots if any amount of gear is set between Pt. Chehalis and Destruction Island, including Grays Harbor, and the remaining 100 pots cannot be used. Unused buoy tags must be on board the vessel and available for inspection until temporary pot limits are lifted. Storing or possessing crab pots on board any participating vessel in excess of the vessels pot limit is prohibited.

A pot reduction at the start of the 2023-24 season was implemented to ensure equitable access to the resource following strong indications of above average crab abundance. WDFW will continue to monitor indicators of crab abundance and evaluate the need for changes as necessary.

Catch data as reported on State fish tickets forms the foundation for harvest sharing, which is required for co-management. **WDFW reminds buyers who fill out fish tickets and vessel operators who sign those fish tickets to be aware of your responsibility to accurately report all information on fish tickets, including catch area when first submitted.** When fishing within two or more reporting areas within a single trip, fishers must provide the amount caught in each catch area to the buyer at the time of the landing. A map of WDFW commercial crab catch reporting areas can be found at the following link:
<https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/maps#catch-reporting>.

FAIR START PROVISIONS:

Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-340-400) in the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the waters between Cape Falcon, Oregon (45°46.00) and Point Arena, CA are subject to the Fair Start Provisions described below.

- Cape Falcon, OR to the US – Canada Border: Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-340-400) in the area between Point Arena, CA and Cape Falcon, OR before the area between Cape Falcon and the US – Canada Border opens will not be allowed to fish in this area until 8:00 am March 2, 2024.
- WAC 220-340-400 Definition—Commercial crab fishing: “Commercial crab fishing” means any taking, fishing, use, or operation of gear to fish for crab for commercial purposes and includes the possession of crab on the water for commercial purposes, and the landing or initial delivery of crab for commercial purposes.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING:

New rules specify that all vessels participating in the WA coastal Dungeness crab fishery must have a functioning EM system installed, activated, and transmitting data to the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission (PSMFC). Fishers that experience technical issues with their EM system must secure an Exemption Permit from WDFW before they can resume fishing. More information about how to obtain an Exemption Permit can be found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/electronic-monitoring#em-exemption>.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS (SMA):

Quinault SMA:

The Quinault primary SMA is scheduled to remain closed to non-treaty fishers until further notice.

The Quinault primary SMA is described as the coastal waters shoreward of a line approximating the 27-fathom depth curve between Raft River (47°28.00) and Copalis River (47°08.00) according to the following coordinates:

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|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| • Northeast Corner (Raft River): | 47°28.00' N. Lat. | 124°20.70' W. Lon. |
| • Northwest Corner: | 47°28.00' N. Lat. | 124°34.00' W. Lon. |
| • Southwest Corner: | 47°08.00' N. Lat. | 124°25.50' W. Lon. |
| • Southeast Corner (Copalis River): | 47°08.00' N. Lat. | 124°11.20' W. Lon. |

The Quileute SMA

The Quileute SMA is scheduled to remain closed to state fishers until 8:00 AM, May 1, 2024.

The Quileute SMA is described as the area from Cape Johnson to Destruction Island shoreward of a line approximating 30 fathoms according to the following points:

- | | | |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| • Northeast Corner (Cape Johnson): | 47°58.00' N. Lat. | 124°40.40' W. Lon. |
| • Northwest Corner: | 47°58.00' N. Lat. | 124°49.00' W. Lon. |
| • Southwest Corner: | 47°40.50' N. Lat. | 124°40.00' W. Lon. |
| • Southeast Corner (Destruction Island): | 47°40.50' N. Lat. | 124°24.43' W. Lon. |

There will be a 100-pot limit in the SMA from May 1, 2024 through May 31, 2024. Fishers will be required to pre-register with WDFW prior to deploying gear in this area.

The Makah SMA

The Makah SMA is scheduled to open to state fishers on March 2, 2024, at 8:00 AM.

The SMA is described as the coastal waters between 48°02.15' N' Lat. to 48°19.50' N' Lat. east of a line connecting those points approximating the 25-fathom line according to the following coordinates:

- Northeast Corner: Tatoosh Island
- Northwest Corner: 48°19.50' N. Lat. 124°50.45' W. Lon.
- Southwest Corner: 48°02.15' N. Lat. 124°50.45' W. Lon.
- Southeast Corner: 48°02.15' N. Lat. 124°41.00' W. Lon.

There will be a 200-pot limit in the SMA for the first 30-days following the opening of the SMA to state fishers. Fishers must preregister with WDFW **twenty-four hours** prior to deploying gear in this area by contacting Jamie Fuller at Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov or by telephone at 360-580-0875.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

- A hold inspection certificate number is required on all fish tickets **until March 2, 2024**.
- Each crab pot must be rigged with line that is marked with 12 inches of continuous red in at least two places. At a minimum, 12 inches of continuous line must be marked in red, no more than one fathom from the main buoy and no more than one fathom from the pot. WAC 220-340-430 (6ii)
- License owners **MUST** register one unique buoy color scheme per coastal crab license with WDFW. License owners must complete buoy registration **annually** before fishing. If this is your first time registering buoys for the commercial WA Dungeness crab fishery or you want to change your colors, contact Jamie Fuller at 360-580-0875 to verify your color scheme is available. Buoy registration must be completed using the WDFW online registration form. It requires that you use a smartphone or tablet to take photos of your buoys. To access the registration form visit: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/1a6ae9a42a7342d4884f63a089968aa9>. If you do not have a smartphone or are unable to complete the registration, contact Jamie Fuller at 360-580-0875 or Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov.
- WDFW would like your help, please call the WDFW Police Dispatch WildCom Center at (360) 902-2936 (option 1) if you witness or have information regarding enforcement violations including fishing in closed areas, starting early, pots without buoy tags, etc.

If you have any questions pertaining to this notice, contact Jamie Fuller at Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov or 360-580-0875 or Matt George at Matthew.George@dfw.wa.gov or 360-640-1066