

Commercial Dungeness Crab Rules – Coastal Comprehensive Line Marking Rules

Lorna Wargo & Megan Hintz
Intergovernmental Ocean Policy
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Washington
Department of
**FISH &
WILDLIFE**

Commercial Dungeness crab fishing rules

Presentation Outline

Introduction

- Purpose and Need
- Fishery Overview

Updates

- Large Whale Entanglements
- NOAA Take Reduction Team
- Incidental Take Permit and Conservation Plan
- Risk Reduction Measures

Proposed rule amendments: WAC 220-340-430

Questions/Discussion





Introduction

Proposed Rule

Purpose and Need

Coastal and Puget Sound

- Gear marking prohibitions
- Compliance responsibility – shifting to operator
- Clarify annual buoy registration deadline – before fishing

Coastal Dungeness crab

- Fishing line marking requirements – expanded
- Surface gear length limits
- Clarification on buoy brand registration – prohibit use of brand required in tribal fishery

Need for proposed rule

- Entanglement risk reduction
- Improve gear traceability; positive/negative attribution
- Monitoring requirements for Incidental Take Permit and Take Reduction Team Plan



Fishery Overview

Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery

Highly lucrative commercial fishery

State authority to manage D. crab fishery in federal waters

Limited Entry – 223 coastal licenses

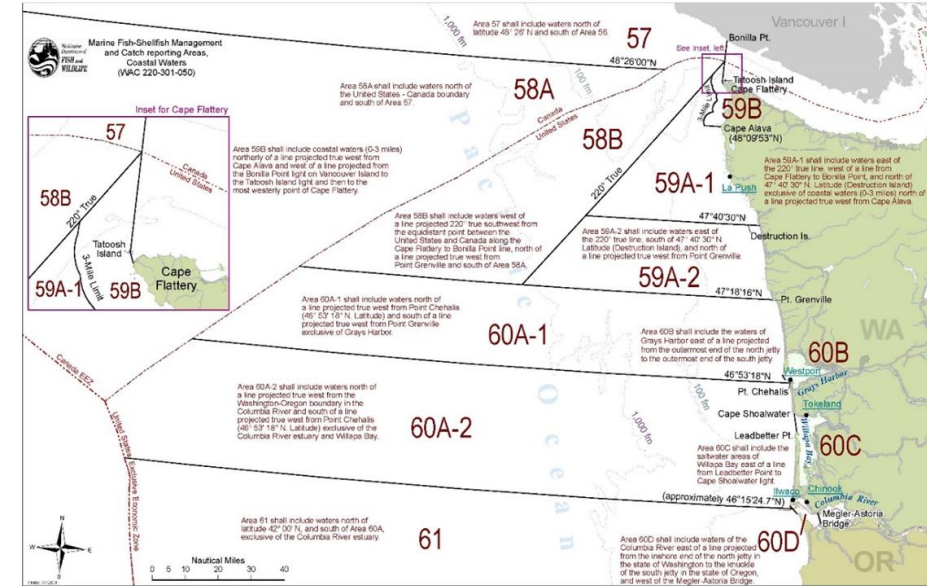
3-S strategy – Size, Sex, Season

Monitoring programs

- Pot and Buoy Tags – Pot level identification to owner, year, season
- Electronic Monitoring Program – replaced paper logs, provides pot-level location data
- Line Marking – Each vertical line marked, distinctive to WA coastal D. crab

Entanglement risk reduction programs

- Derelict Gear Program (2009) – Expanded Program (2020)
- Summer Pot Reduction Program – aligned with large whale migration/presence timing



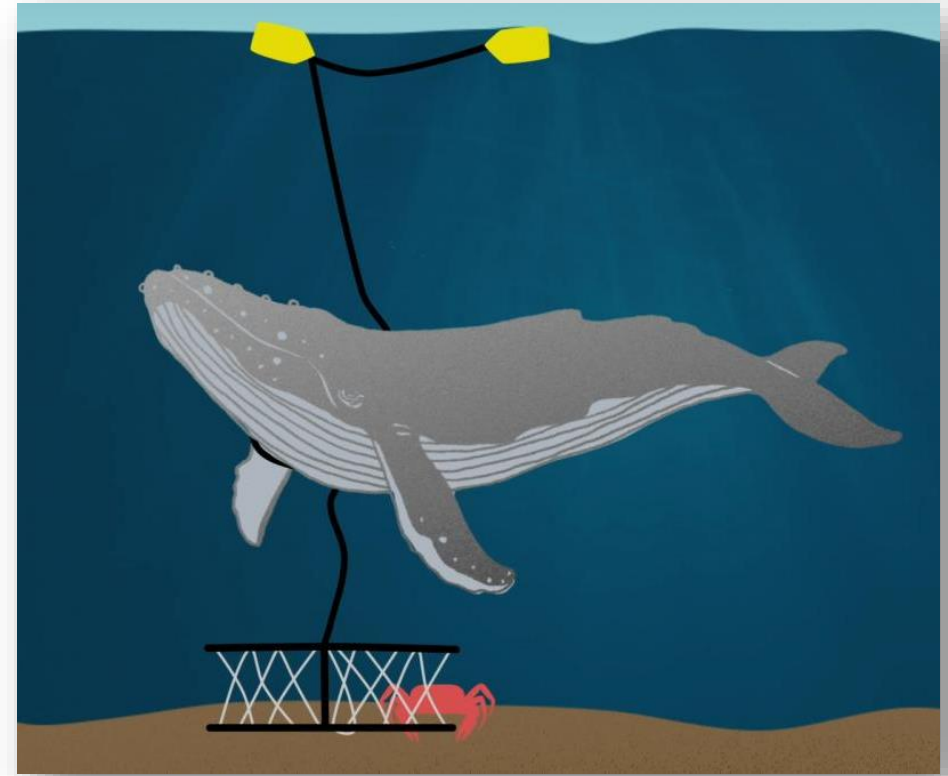
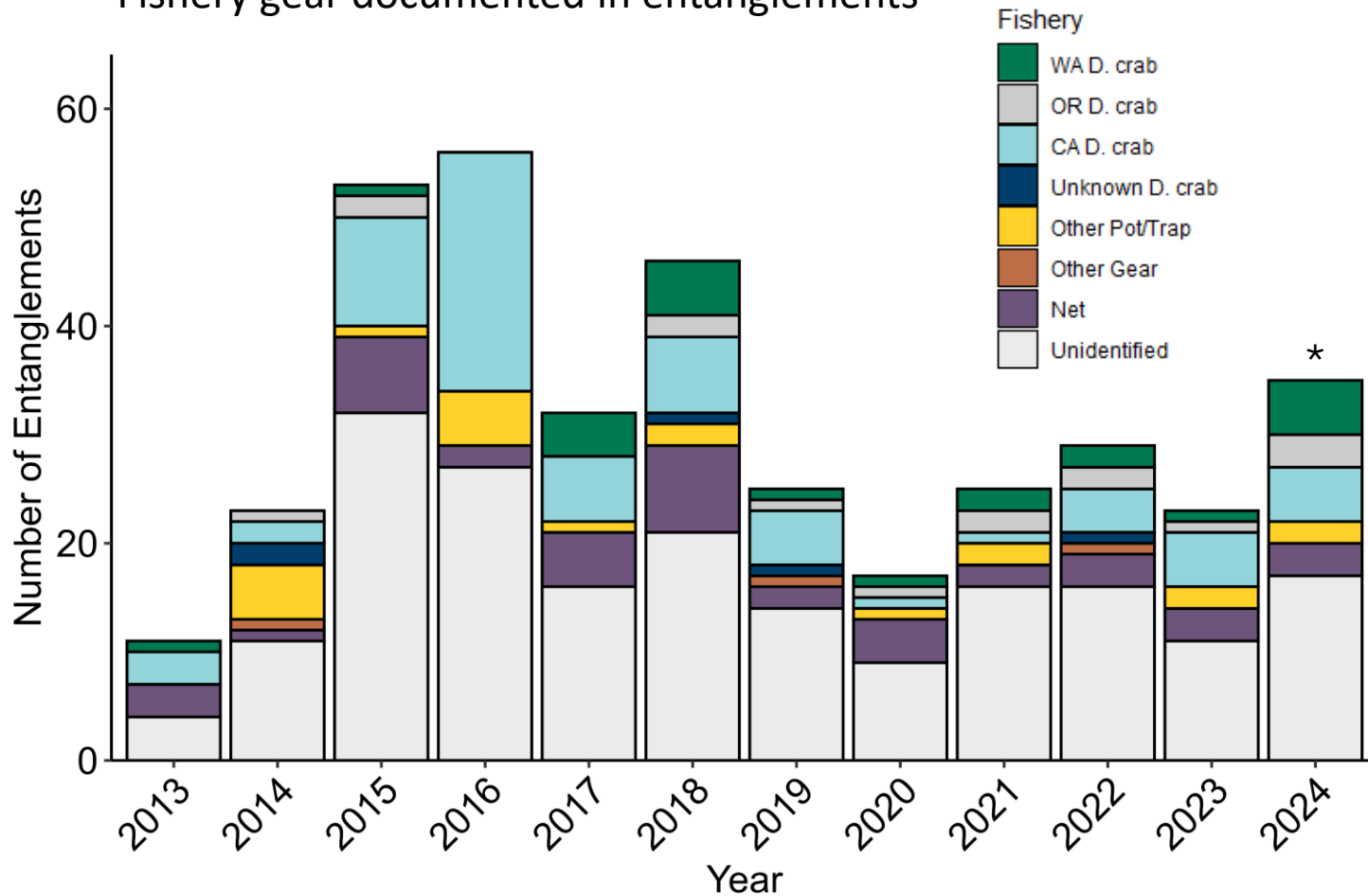


Updates

Large whale entanglements

West Coast Large Whale Entanglements

Fishery gear documented in entanglements



Data provided by the National Marine Fishery Services West Coast entanglement database;
* 2024 data is preliminary

MMPA

West Coast Take Reduction Team (TRT)

Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Section 118

Preliminary Scope

- Species: Central America humpback whales, Mexico humpback whales, North Pacific blue whales
- Fisheries: Federal sablefish pot, CA Dungeness crab pot, OR Dungeness crab pot, WA coastal commercial Dungeness crab pot, CA spot prawn pot

Goal

- Reduce mortality and serious injury (M/SI) below each stocks Potential Biological Removal (PBR)

TRT Members

- State fisheries managers, Federal, Scientists, Conservationists (NGOs), Fishery participants
- Develop a Take Reduction Plan of regulatory and voluntary measures such as gear modifications, modifications to fisheries practices, and fishery closures within 6 months

June – November 2025

ESA Section 10

Incidental Take Permit (ITP)

Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA)

An application must include a conservation plan that specifies:

- Description of endangered and threatened species impacted
- Description of the fishery
- Anticipated impact on listed species and habitat
- Steps that will be taken to **avoid, minimize, mitigate, and monitor** impacts

Conservation Plan

- Status: In process, developing adaptive management triggers and responses
- Monitoring = Comprehensive line marking

Conservation Plan

Entanglement risk reduction management measures



Reduce vertical lines and covered species co-occurrence

Maintain limited entry to the fishery and associated pot limits
Eliminated replacement tags
Summer pot reduction
Derelict gear recovery program and in season expansion



Implement fishery practices that reduce the risk of entanglements

Taut line best practice requirement
Summer gear tending requirement
Surface gear limitations



Increase quality and resolution of fishery and entanglement data collection to support information-based decision making

Electronic monitoring of crab fleet
Gear marking, *including comprehensive line marking*
Outreach to increase reporting and quality of reports of entanglements



Support research and development of gear modifications to reduce entanglement risk

Pathway for permitting experimental on-demand gear



Proposed rule amendments WAC 220-340-430

Proposed rule

Coastal and Puget Sound Dungeness Crab

Improve rule clarity

- Shift from “Unlawful to” and instead describe the action necessary to achieve compliance [5d, 6c]
- Specify that annual buoy registration must be completed prior to the start of fishing [5(d)]
- Buoys must be branded with the buoy brand number registered with the department [5(d)(i)]

Transfer compliance responsibility from license holder to vessel operator actively fishing under the license [5(d), 6(a), 5(d)(i)]

Prohibit marking or color schemes used by other fisheries to avoid cross-jurisdictional overlap [6b]

Proposed rule

Coastal Dungeness Crab

Require comprehensive line marking on all gear [6c]

- Phased implementation, surface line marking and then vertical line marking
- Multiple methods for marking gear

Limit the amount of surface gear allowed to reduce the risk of entanglements [7]

- Total length of line limited to 36 feet, inclusive of buoys
- Buoys limited to two trailer buoys in addition to the main buoy

Prohibit the registration and use of a buoy brand required by a treaty tribal fishery [5(d)(v)]

Proposed WA coastal Dungeness Crab Line Marking Phased Implementation

Phase 1: December 1, 2025

- Surface gear line marking
- Maintain current 12-inch continuous mark in the top fathom of vertical line *until* transition to new main line marking requirements (phase 2)
- No longer require the bottom 12-inch continuous red mark within one fathom of the pot
- Surface gear limitations on the amount of line and buoys attached to each pot

Phase 2: December 1, 2028

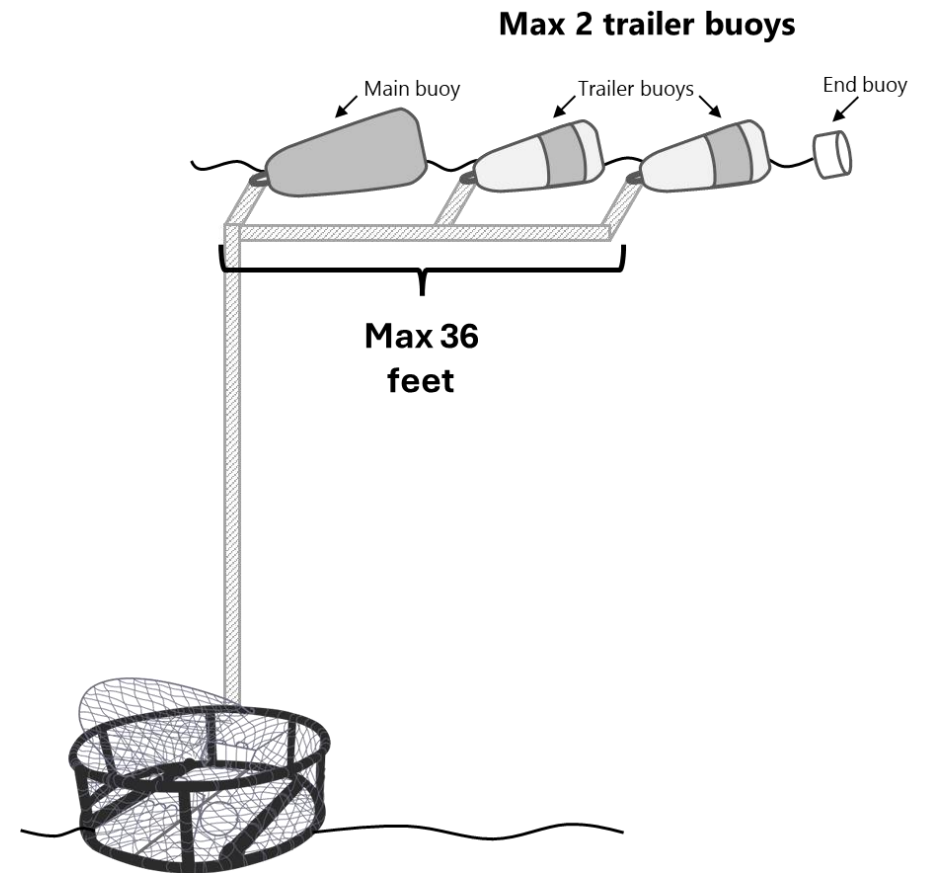
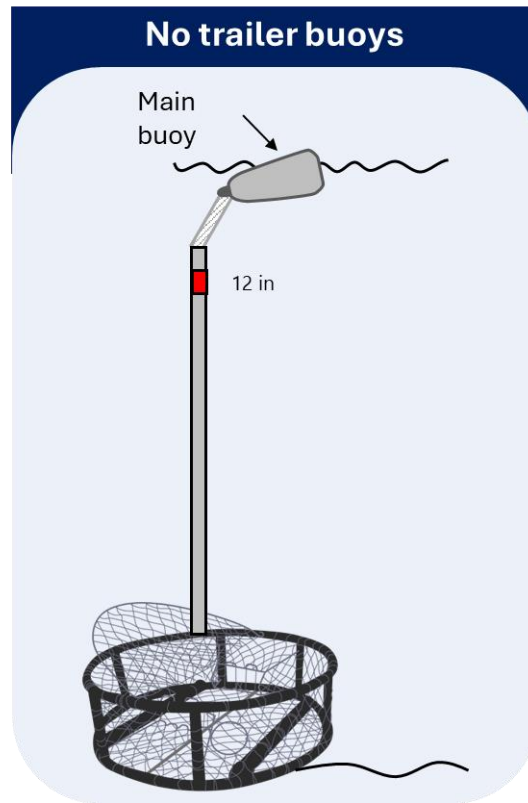
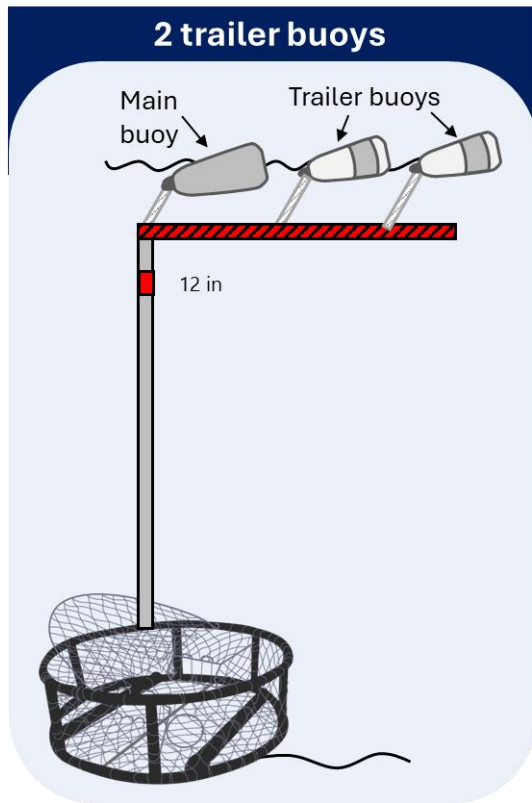
- All phase 1 requirements
- Main line (vertical line from buoy to pot) marked
 - Top 15 fathoms of line marked
 - Shallow depth provision allows for less than 15 fathoms of line to be marked when fishing with less than 20 fathoms of line

Proposed WA coastal Dungeness Crab Line Marking

Phase 1: Effective December 1, 2025

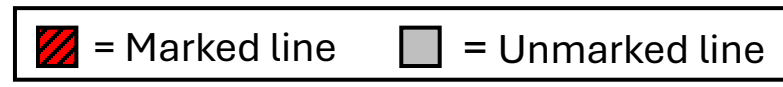
Surface (or trailer) line marking and surface gear limitations

▨ = Marked line □ = unmarked line



Proposed WA coastal Dungeness Crab Line Marking

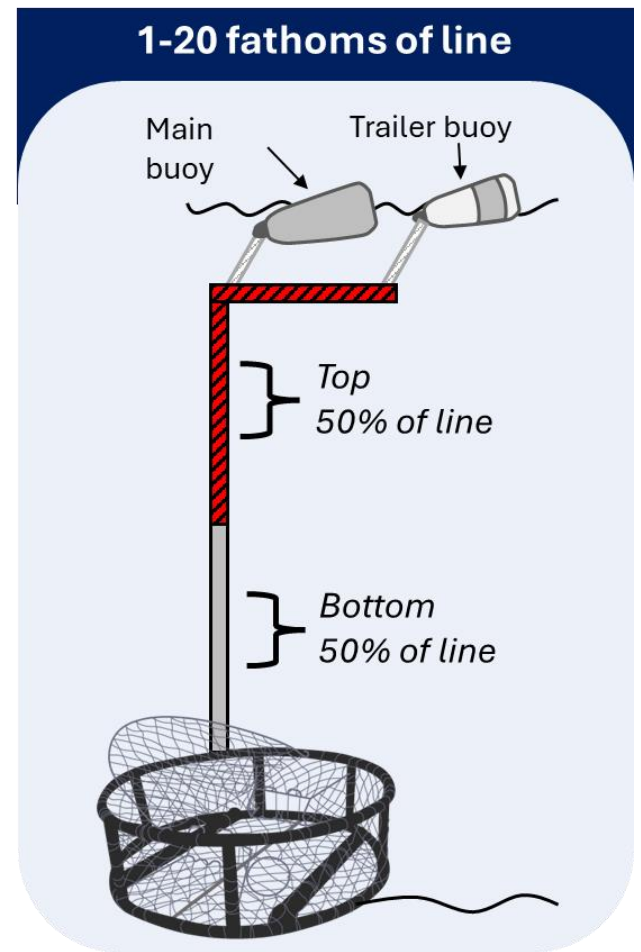
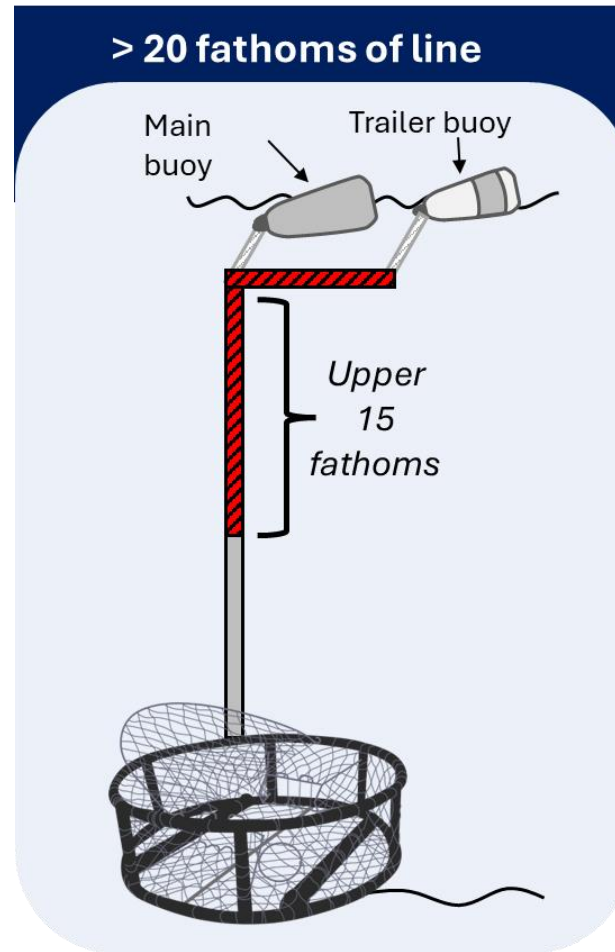
Phase 2: December 1, 2028



Main vertical line marking

Top 15 fathoms of line must be marked

Shallow depth provision:
when fishing a total line length of less than 20 fathoms the top 50% of the line marked

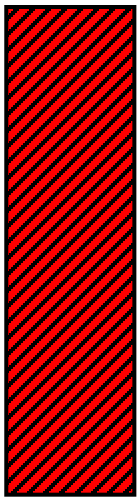


Proposed WA coastal Dungeness Crab Line Marking

Line Marking Options

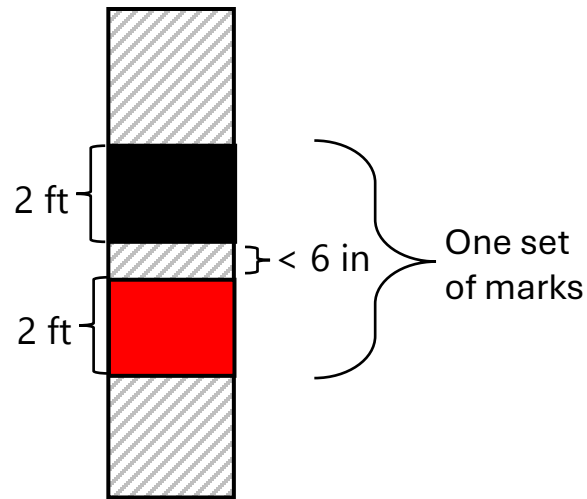
Manufactured Line

3 strands: 2 strands red and 1 strand black
Tracer line permissible



Solid markings

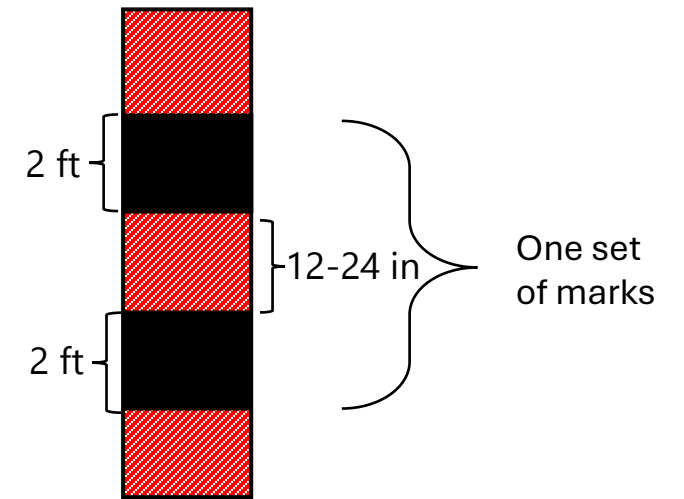
For line of any color: 2 ft of black *within 6 inches of* 2 ft of red.
Marks must cover circumference of line



Main line can be any color, except red or black

Solid markings

For red line: 2 ft of black *within 12 - 24 inches of* 2 ft of black. Marks must cover circumference of line



Red line

Proposed WA coastal Dungeness Crab Line Marking

Marked line examples

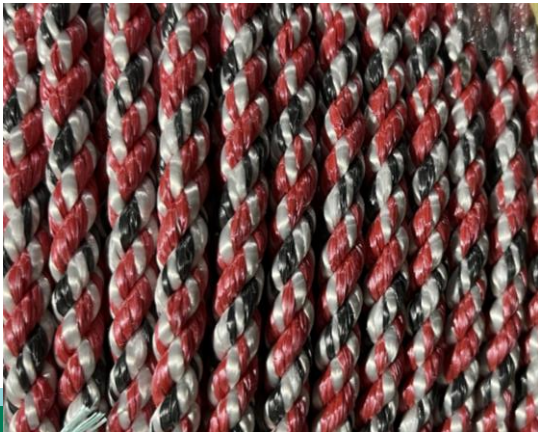
Manufactured



Floating line with tan tracer



Red line with black tracer



Hydropro 3/8"



Hydropro 1/2"

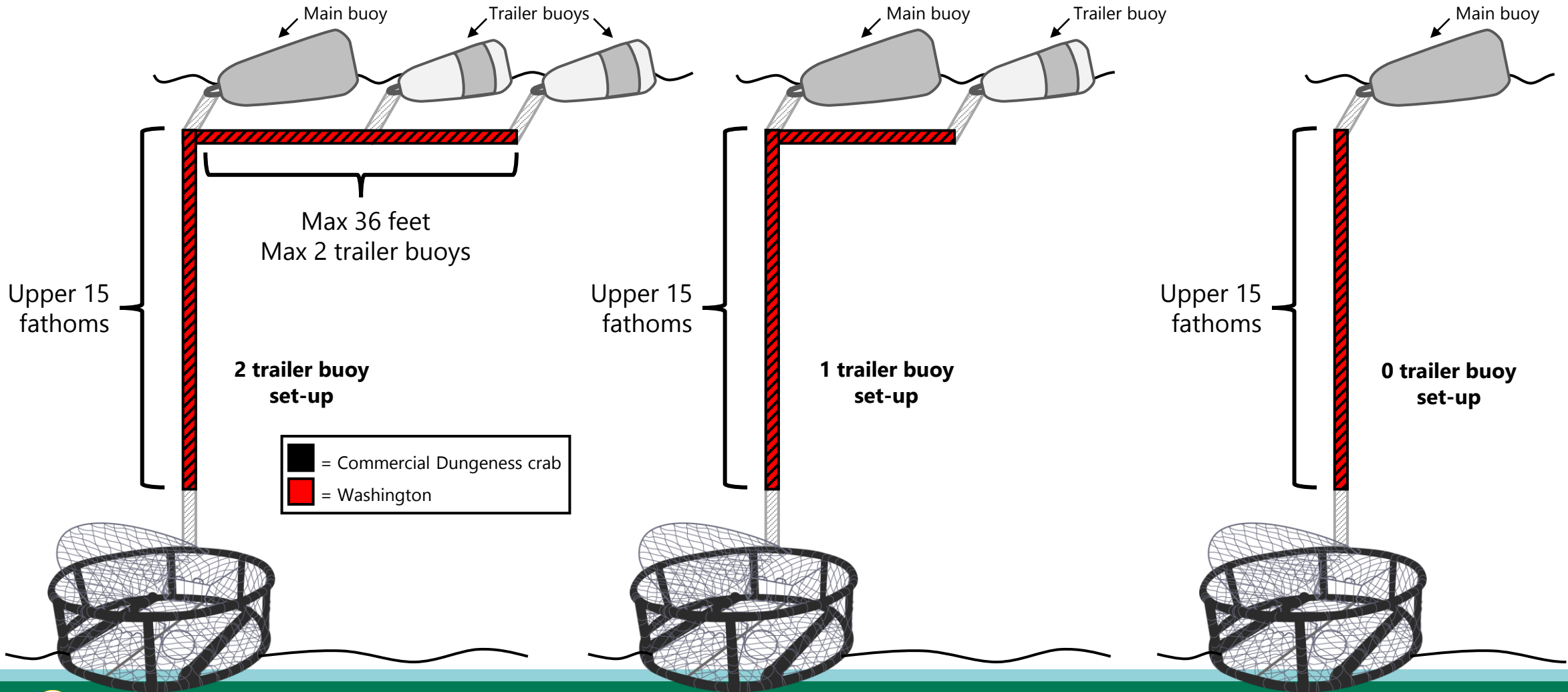
Solid marks



Fully implemented comprehensive line marking proposal

December 1, 2028

Washington coastal Dungeness crab gear with red and black marked line used for any **surface line** *and* the **upper 15 fathoms of the main line**



Public Input Opportunities

Date	Activity	Who
Aug. 31, 2022	Coastal Crab Industry Meeting	Fishery participants (license holders and vessel operators)
Sept. 21, 2022	Coastal Crab Industry Meeting	Fishery participants (license holders and vessel operators)
Oct. 13, 2022	Coastal Crab Industry Meeting	Fishery participants (license holders and vessel operators)
May 11, 2023	Electronic Monitoring Industry Meeting (PDF)	Fishery participants (license holders and vessel operators)
June 4, 2024	Westport Workshop; Review line marking technical detail, gather input on rule construction	Cross-section of fishery participants
June 5, 2024	Ilwaco Workshop; Review line marking technical detail, gather input on rule construction	Cross-section of fishery participants
September 12, 2024	Public Meeting	Fishery participants (license holders and vessel operators)
December 20, 2024	Advisory Body Meeting Review draft rule language	WA D. Crab Advisory Board Members
February 26, 2025	Public Town Hall	Fishery participants (license holders and vessel operators) and General Public

Public Comments

through March 11

Line marking methods

- Request to allow intertwining a small black line into red line for durability because painting will fade quickly
- Manufactured line will fade to pink and black
- Make it difficult to distinguish quickly surface line from vertical line, useful for crew

Surface gear limitations

- 36 feet very short
- Need longer surface gear allowance for safety by some large vessels, fishing deep
- As written, the rule won't limit the amount of line on the surface, common practice to use floating line for the top shot which can float on the surface when slack

General support



Proposed rule changes

Next Steps

F&W Commission Meeting
Public Hearing

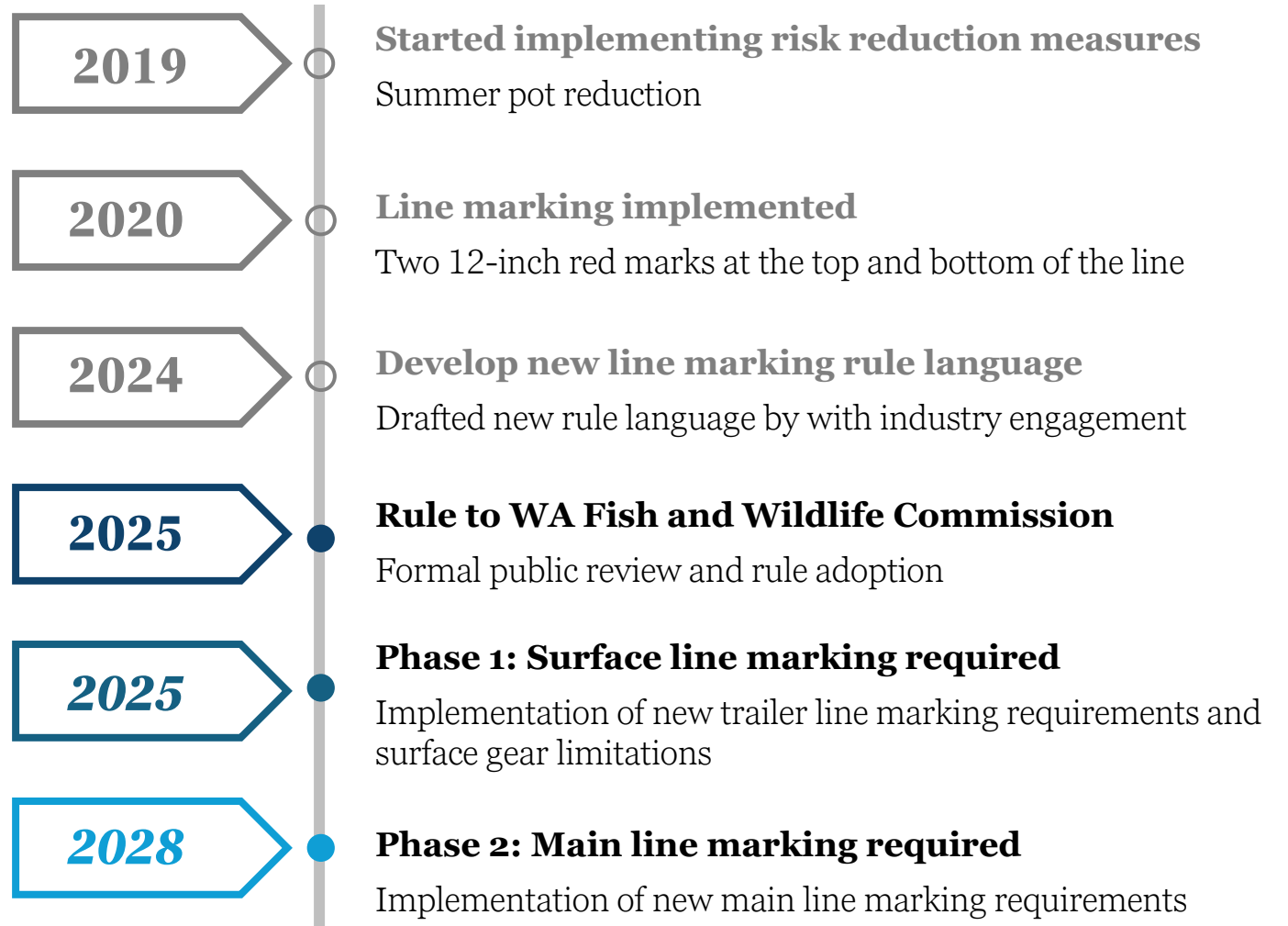
✓ March 20-22, 2025

Public Comment
open until March 24th at noon

- ❑ Public engagement webpage
- ❑ Email: commercialcrabrules@publicinput.com
- ❑ Voicemail to 855-925-2801
project code 11027

F&W Commission Meeting
Decision

- April 3-5, 2025
- Olympia, WA





Questions?

Megan Hintz

Megan.Hintz@dfw.wa.gov

564-215-1757

Lorna Wargo

Lorna.Wargo@dfw.wa.gov

360-581-5611

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