

# Puget Sound Crab Annual Policy Update



**Dungeness Crab, *Metacarcinus magister***  
(*Cancer magister*)



**Red Rock Crab, *Cancer productus***

FW Commission Fish Committee - 4/4/25

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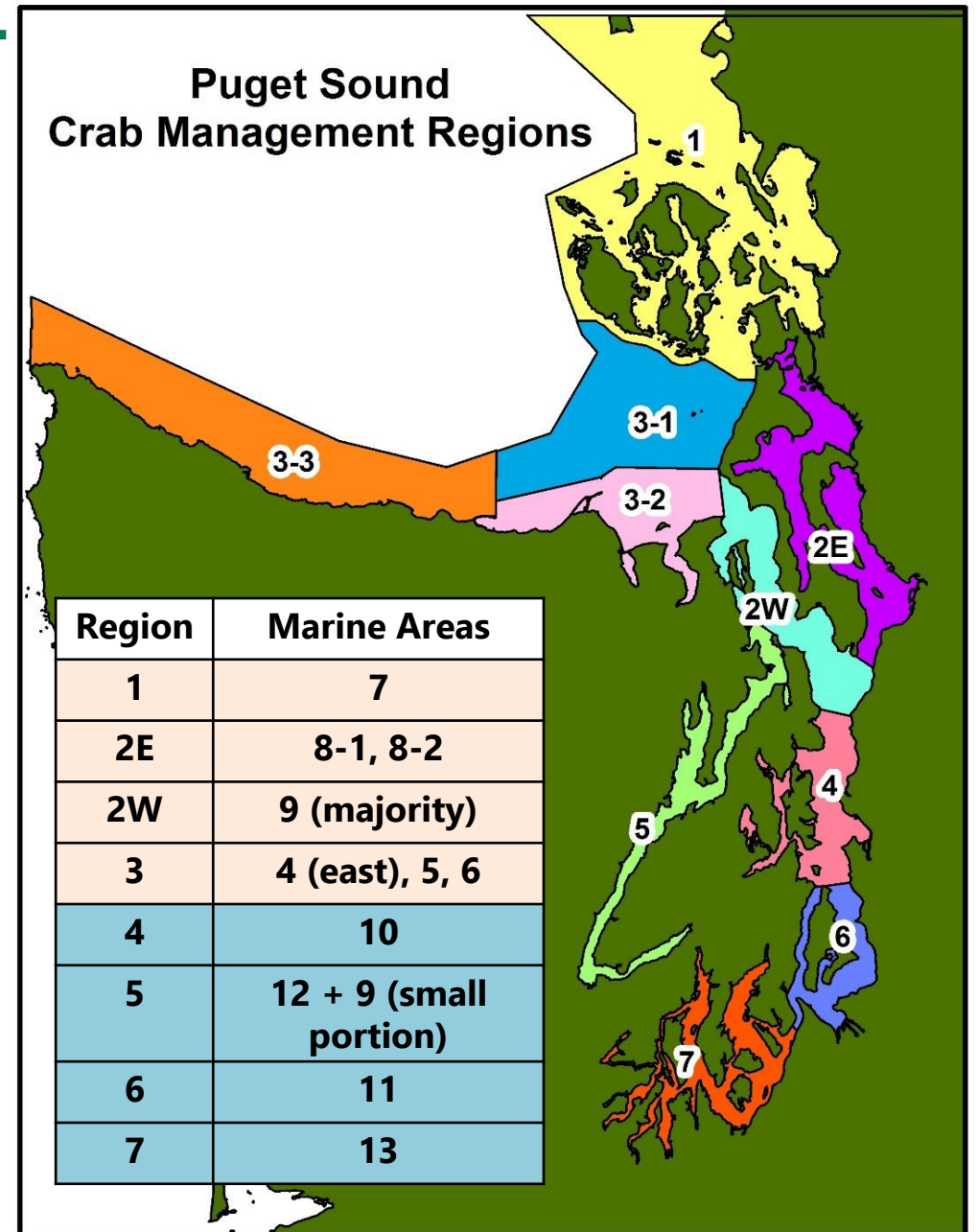
# Puget Sound Crab – Topics Outline

- Puget Sound Crab Policy - Policy [C-3609](#)
- Fisheries Sampling
- Fisheries Management Overview and Performance
- Crab Creel Update
- Gear Recovery Program
- Year in Review



# Puget Sound Crab Fishery Policy

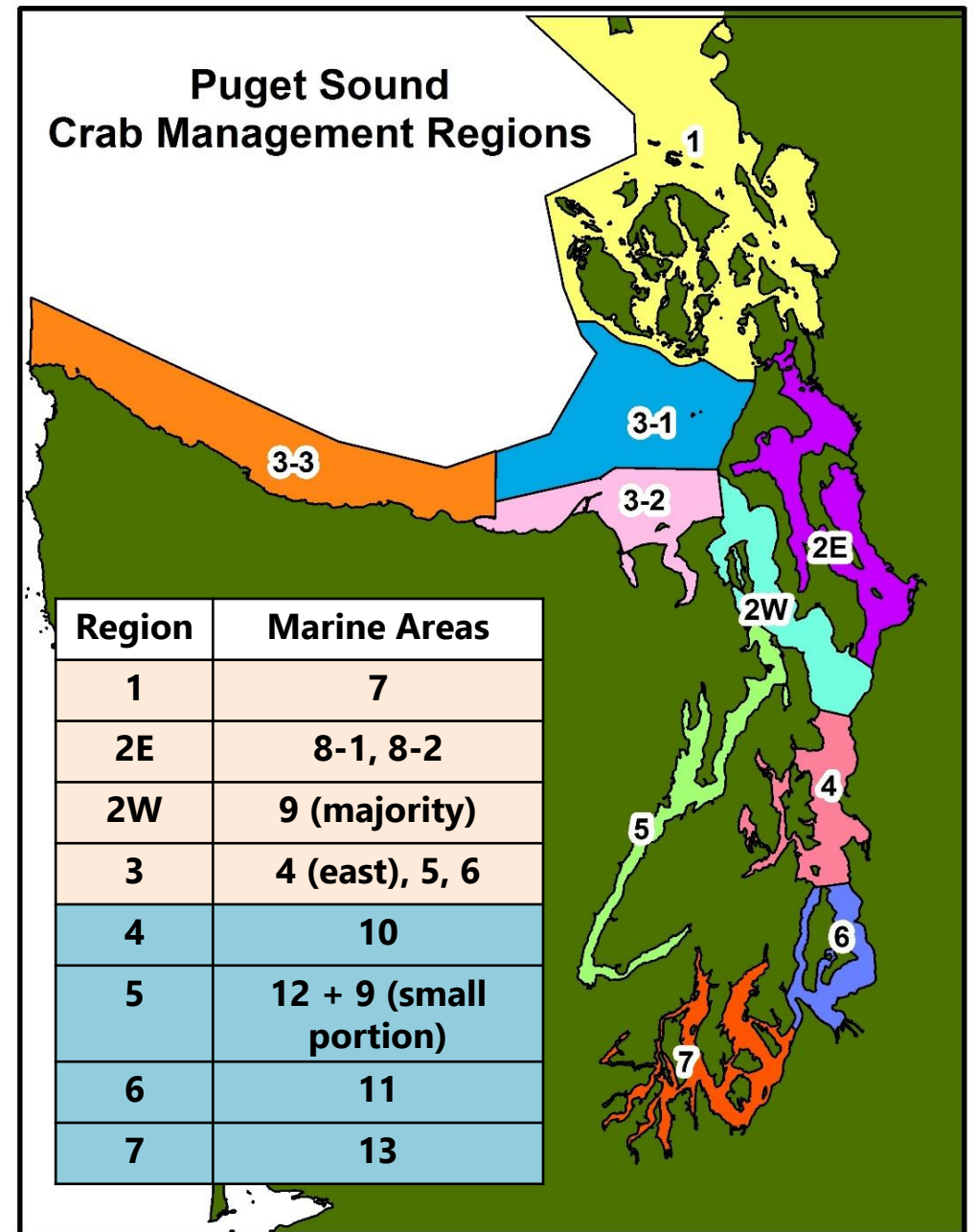
- Policy [C-3609](#) revised and adopted on October 1, 2010 – Protect and conserve PS Dungeness crab resource
- Regions 1, 2E, 2W, and 3 have State commercial and recreational harvest opportunity
- Regions 4, 5, 6 and 7 are State recreational priority only
- Maintains a **base recreational season** from year to year
  - July - Labor Day, 5 days per week, including weekends *(dependent on state share)*
  - October - December winter season, 7 days/week *(dependent on state share remaining after summer season)*
  - 5 crab daily bag limit



# Puget Sound Crab Policy – Cont.

Other key policy elements include:

- Manage using the “3-S” system – Size, Sex Season
- Develop and implement enforcement strategies and pursue communication, education, and outreach to improve compliance
- Implement strategies to reduce derelict crab pots
- Recognize differences in regional abundance and implement policy priorities to share available resource
- Annual regional management plans





# Fisheries Sampling

# Puget Sound Crab Surveys

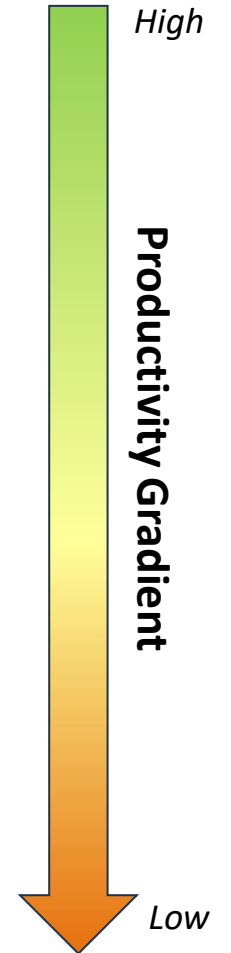
- WDFW and Tribal Comanagers conduct pre-season test fisheries to assess population abundance and condition
- Data collected includes:
  - catch per pot (legal, sub-legal, female)
  - bycatch
  - carapace width
  - sex/shell hardness
- In-season and post-season tests are conducted to inform management actions



# Crab Test Fisheries

*Dungeness crab, Legal Size Males (LSM) per pot from test fisheries*

Marine Area	Sampling Leads	Pre- 2022	Post- 2022	Pre- 2023	Post- 2023	Pre- 2024	Post- 2024
4 east, 5, 6							
7 South	Lummi, Upper Skagit	25.3		15.6		16.9	
7 North	Lummi	26.1		20.7		19.0	
8-1	Swinomish	10.4		7.3		24.4	
8-1	Upper Skagit	7.1		12.4		18.7	
8-2 (Port Susan)	Tulalip	8.6		10.7		13.3	
8-2 (Everett)	Tulalip	14.6		8.1		17.7	
9	WDFW, others	10.7	3.0	10.0	2.4	19.2	4.4
10	WDFW, Suquamish	7.1	5.2	11.3	6.7	12.0	9.5
11	Puyallup	5.6		5.7		11.5	
12	WDFW	6.9	2.8	5.2	3.0	5.3	2.2
13	WDFW	1.0		1.6		1.0	



# Recreational Crab Fishery Sampling



## Crab Creeling

- Recreational crab fishery sampling program began in 2023.
  - Small staff of 8 seasonal creelers
- Provides opportunity to learn about the fishery and provide outreach and education to crabbers during interviews.
- **Data collected includes:**
  - Compliance information (e.g., recording, harvest rules)
  - Trip and harvester information (location fished, CPUE)
  - Biological data (crab species, size, weight)
- WDFW staff presence lets the public know we are keeping a close eye on the fishery – we saw improved compliance through 2024
  - Problems requiring enforcement intervention can be relayed to the proper staff
- Each year, staff will focus on 2-3 areas to sample intensely with opportunistic sampling throughout all PS for baseline data.





# Crab Creel Survey

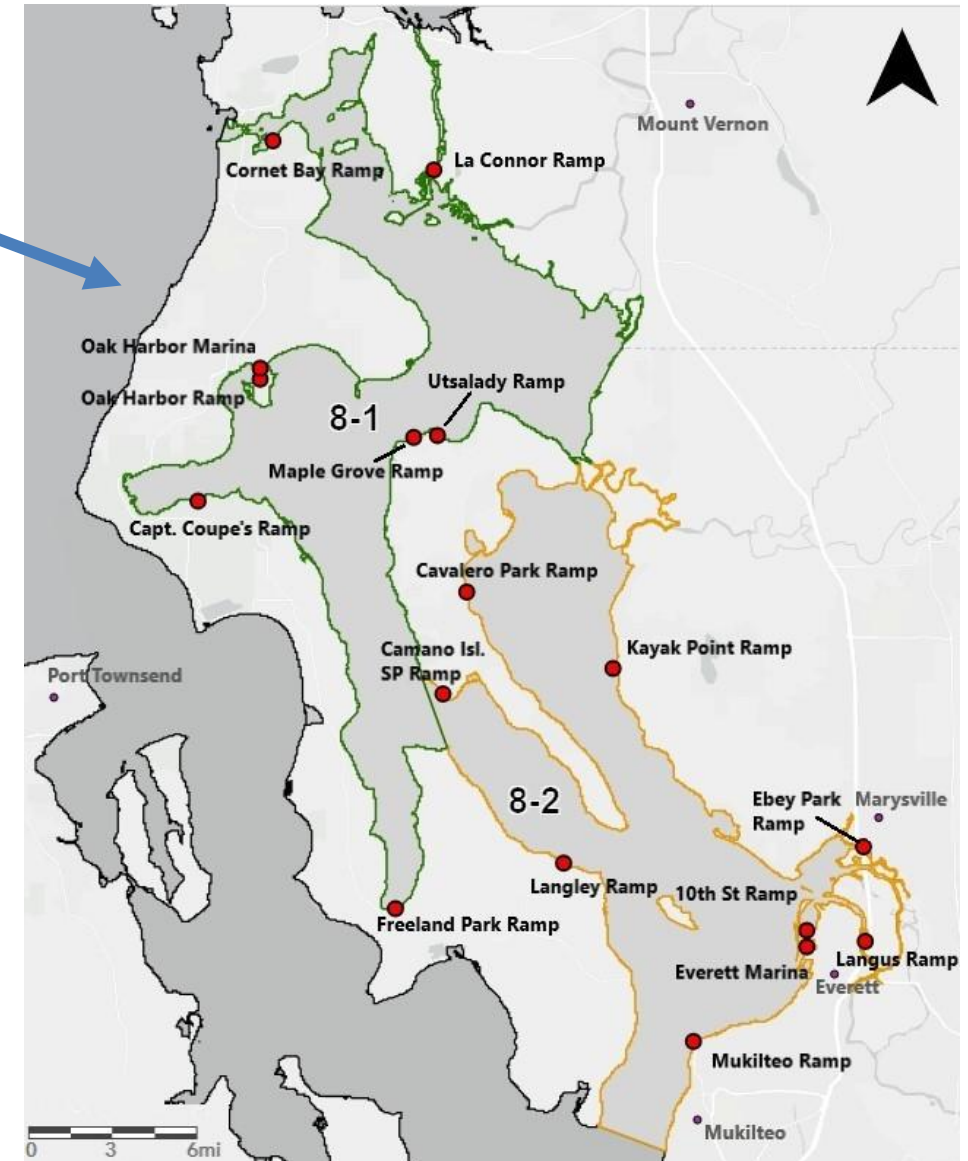
## Marine Areas 8-1 and 8-2 (2024 focus area):

- 17 sites sampled
- 216 individual 6-hour creels conducted

Marine Area:	8-1	8-2	Total
Vessels Contacted:	904	2,330	3,234
CRCs Checked:	1,905	3,994	5,899
Dungeness Crab checked: (Female, sub-legal, soft-shell)	3,767	9,190	12,957
Red rock crab checked: (Female and sub-legal)	185	399	584

## Non-focus area sampling (all other MAs):

- 27 sites sampled
- 1,310 vessels contacted
- 2,282 CRCs checked
- 5,145 Dungeness crab checked
- 1,109 red rock crab checked



# Commercial Sampling

## PS Commercial Crab Market Sample Program

- Intercepts commercially harvested crab being landed and transferred to a dealer.
  - Education/engagement opportunity
  - Characterizes the condition and biometrics of catch that enters the commercial market.
- Data Collected:
  - Individual crab weight, carapace width (size), and shell hardness condition



## Puget Sound Voluntary Commercial Ride-along Program

- Characterizes the fishery on the water.
  - Spatial and seasonal variability
- Collects high resolution catch data on-board active commercial vessels.
  - Bycatch, fishing location, catch per unit effort (CPUE), carapace width (size), and shell hardness condition



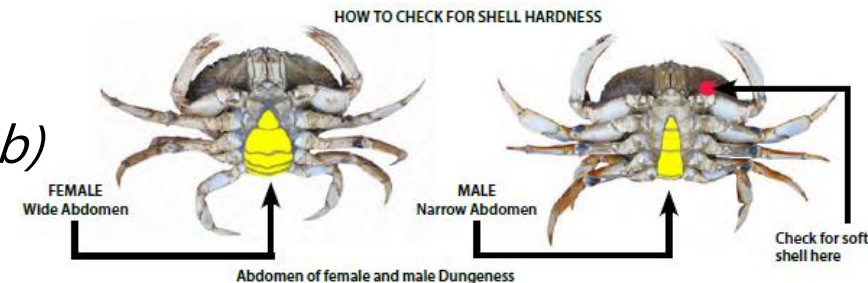


# Fisheries Management Overview and Performance

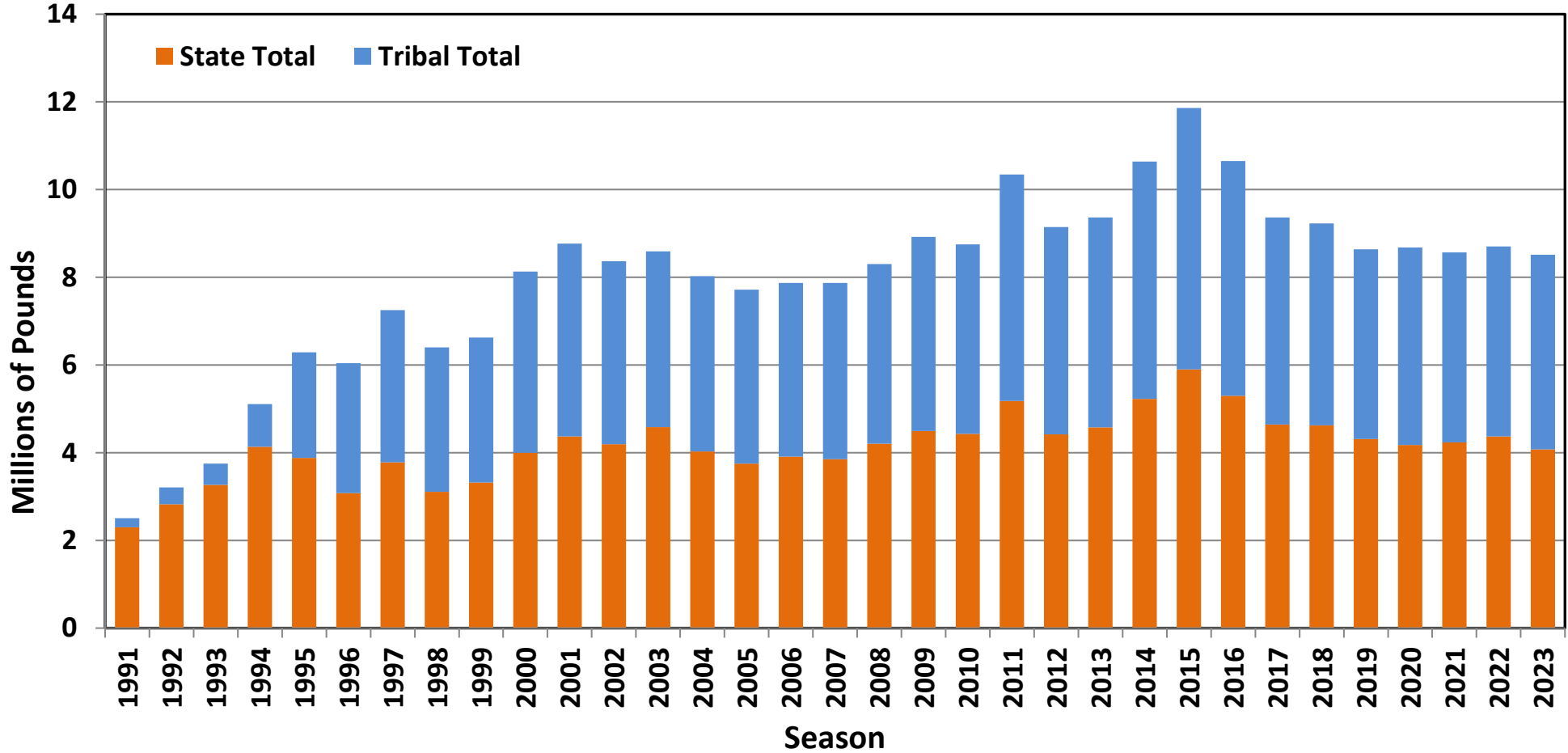
# Dungeness Crab Fishery Management

## 3-S Management Framework

- Size:** the minimum legal size of harvested crab is 6 ¼ in.
  - Provides ~2 years for males to reproduce before entering the fishery
- Sex:** only male crab can be legally retained in the fishery
  - Allows females the opportunity to reproduce without harvest pressure
- Season:** harvest is limited to minimize interaction with 'soft' crab
  - Reduces bycatch mortality
  - Maximizes the quality/value of the resource
  - All seasons are set around crab molt periods (*to avoid soft crab*)

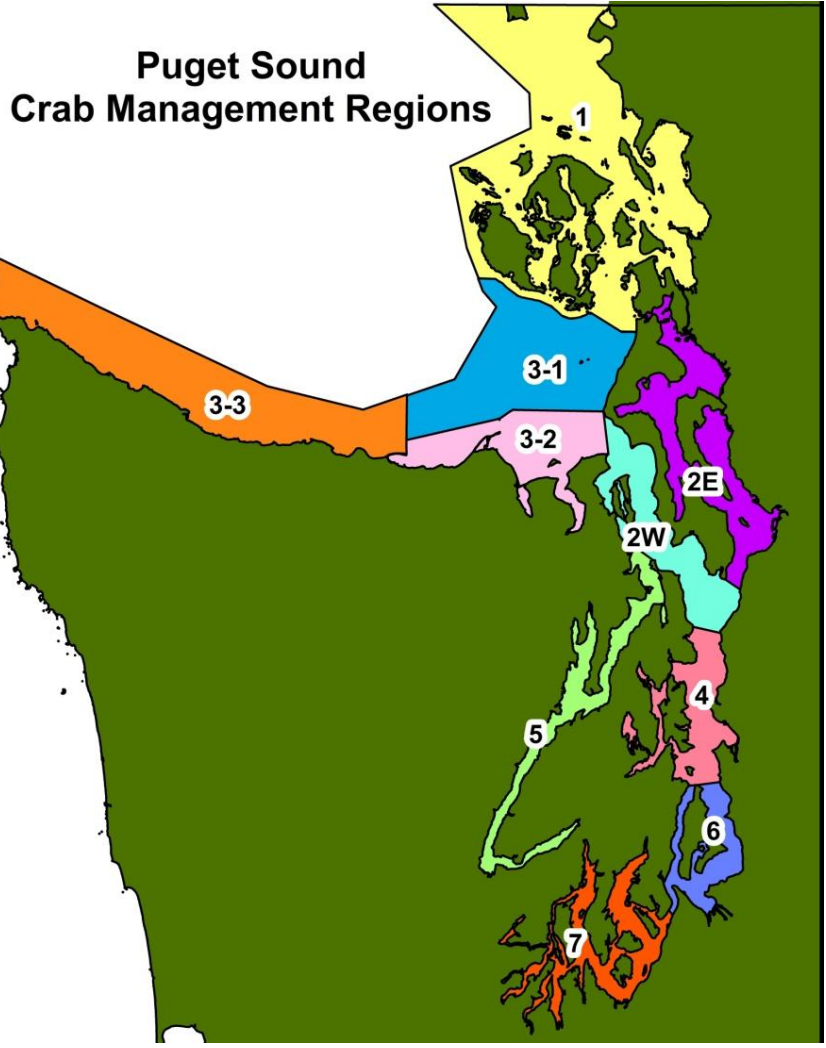
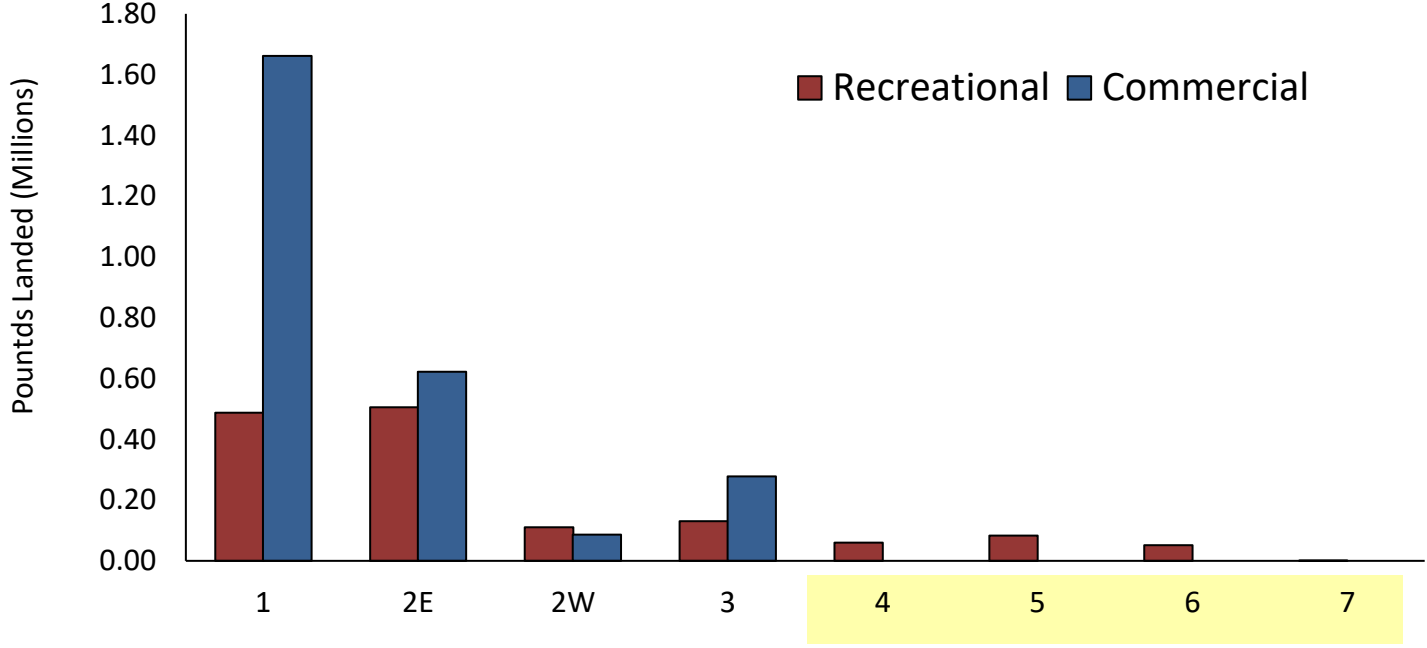


# State and Tribal Dungeness Crab Harvest from Puget Sound (1991-2023)



# State Dungeness Crab Harvest by Region

2023-24 Dungeness Crab Landings by Region




# Recreational Dungeness Crab

## Recreational

- Participation requires a Crab Endorsement
  - ~221,500 endorsements sold per year
- Catch recording and reporting required via Catch Record Cards (CRCs)
  - Two separate seasons and CRCs  
(i.e. reporting periods)
  - Summer CRC (July 1 through Labor Day)
  - Winter CRC (After Labor Day through Dec. 31)
  - Reports due Oct. 1 and Feb. 1, respectively



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SUMMER Puget Sound Dungeness Crab Catch Record  
Valid from July 01, 2014 to September 02, 2014  
Use WINTER card after September 02, 2014

NOTICE: Card must be returned or information reported on the Internet even if no crab were kept. See reporting option 1 and 2 below  
\$10.00 Penalty for not returning card or Internet reporting by October 01, 2014

Name: **Dudley DoRight**  
Wild ID: **x x x x - x x x - x x x**  
Residence: **Mill Creek, WA 98012**  
Dealer ID: 1323 Issue Date: 07/10/2014

Report Crab Catch  
**Option 1**  
Return card to address below by October 01, 2014  
Return To: WDFW Fish / CRC Office  
600 Capitol Way N  
Olympia WA 98501-1091

**Option 2**  
Report catch card information on the Internet between September 03-October 01, 2014 at fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov

Season opening dates, closures, and restrictions are available 2014-2015 Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet, on the toll-free shell rule change hotline 1-(866) 880-5431, and on the Internet at www.dfw.wa.gov

Use ballpoint pen only. Do not use a felt tipped pen. Immediately upon retaining a Dungeness crab, you are required to record your catch by completing the record below. Failure to do so is a violation of WAC 220-56-175

**SUMMER**  
14 DOC#: x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x

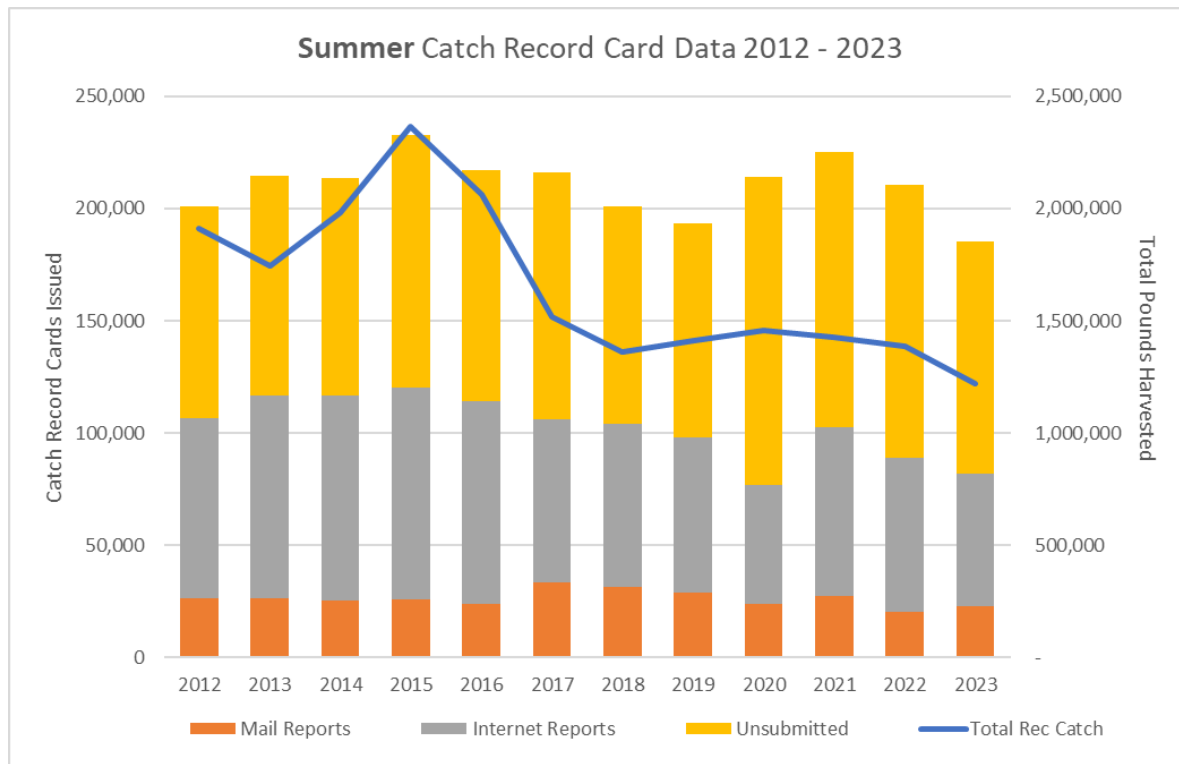
Division Area	Month	Day	Check (✓) one box for each crab kept					
EK	B-2	7	5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
EK	12	8	7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1								
2								
3								



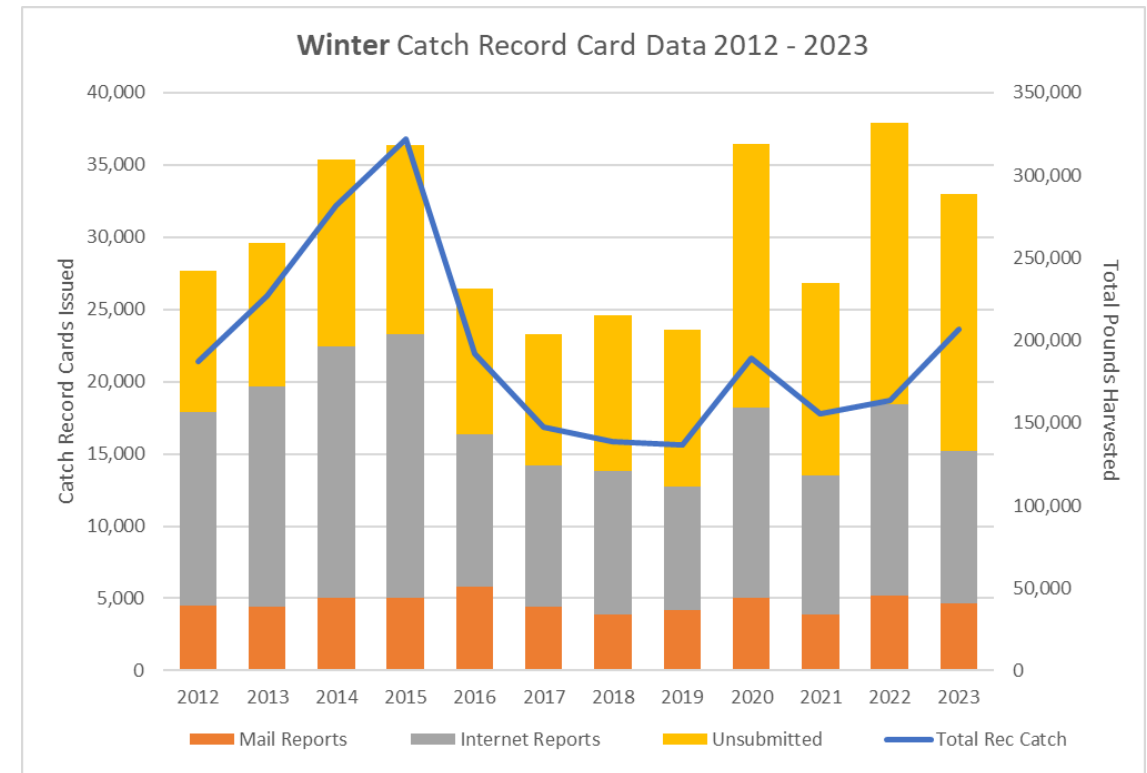
# Dungeness Crab Puget Sound – Recreational

## Catch Record Cards Sold and Returned

**Summer 2023 – 44% Returned**



**Winter 2023 – 46% Returned**

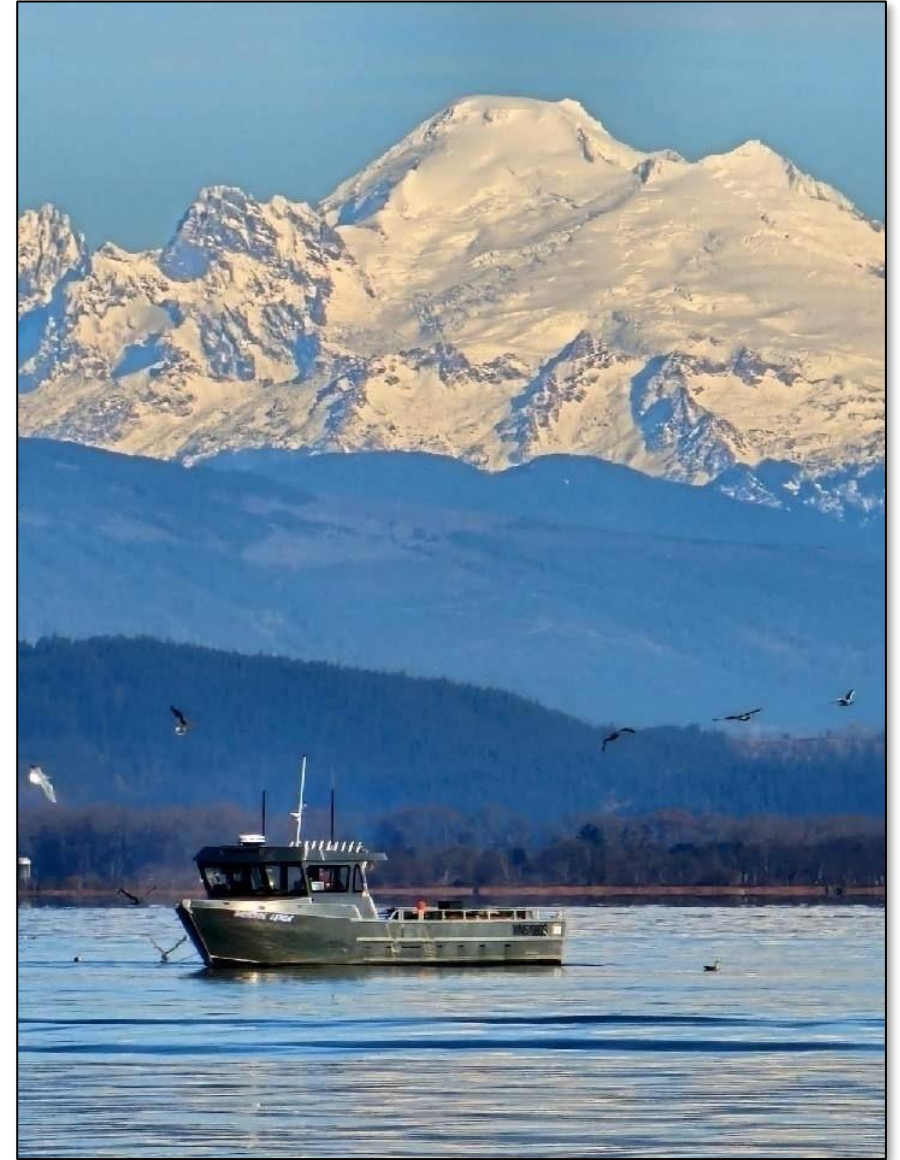




# Commercial Dungeness Crab

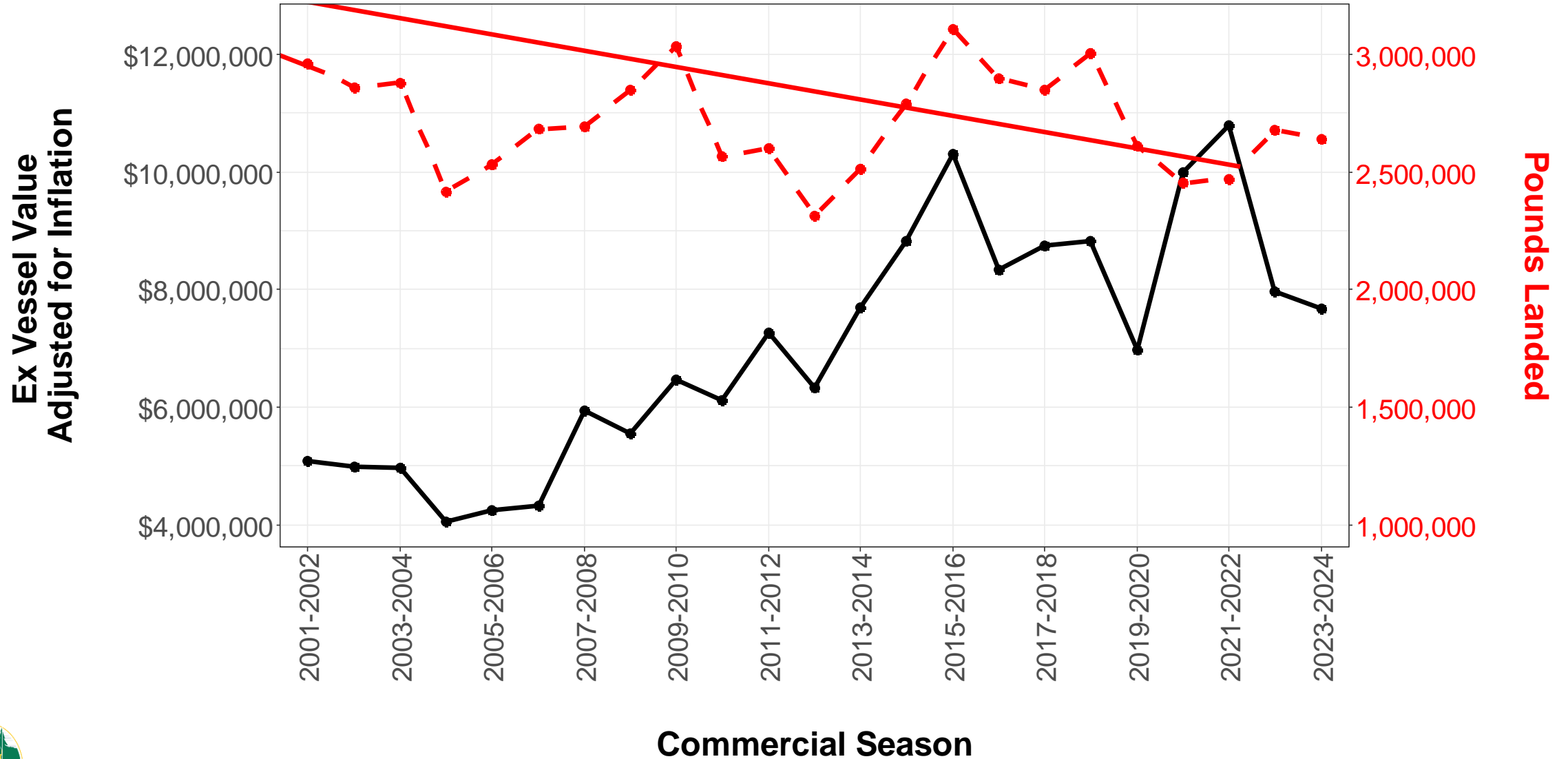
## Puget Sound Commercial

- Limited-entry Fishery, 248 Licenses
  - 132 License owners
  - Maximum of 100 pots per license
  - Maximum of 3 licenses per boat
- All landings must be recorded on an electronic fish ticket
- Season runs from October 1 – April 15
- Commercial targets determined after summer and full winter recreational seasons are planned.
- Live-market, small-boat commercial fishery.
- Separate from coastal commercial crab fisheries.



# Commercial Landings and Adjusted *Ex vessel* Value 2001-02 through 2023-24 Seasons

Total Value (Adjusted for Inflation) and Landings  
(2001-2024)





# **Gear Recovery**

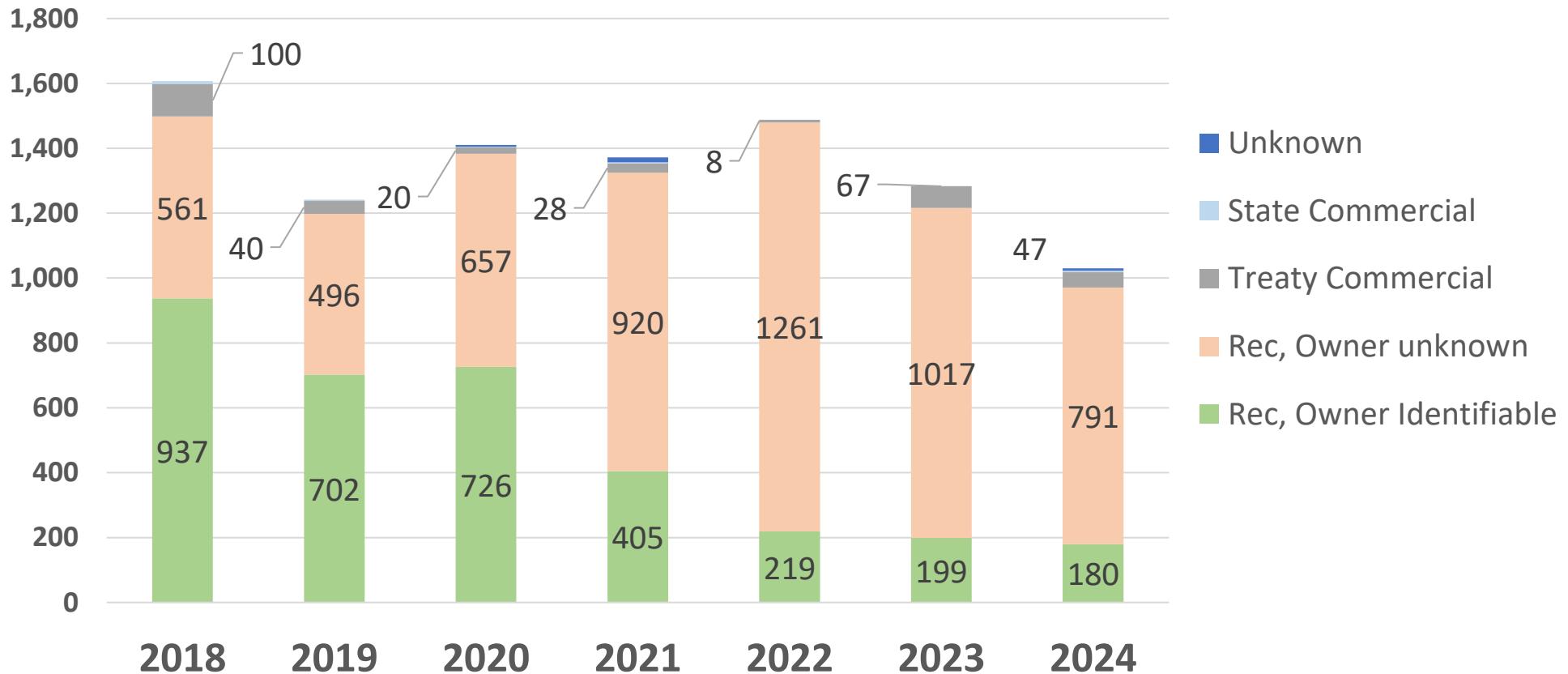
# Gear Recovery Program

- Starting in **2017**, WDFW PS Shellfish team and Enforcement initiated a derelict gear recovery program in Puget Sound
    - Enforcement pulls gear on the water during closed days (Tues/Wed)->WDFW staff process gear (return to owner if possible, donations, recycling)
  - During the summer, we have 4 technicians that are dedicated to derelict gear recovery
  - Enforcement presence required to lawfully pull gear
  - Contract with Northwest Straits Foundation (NWS) and other partners to remove sub-surface gear
- Continued education and outreach needed** – not yet seeing a decline in lost gear annually



# Derelict Gear Recovered by Fishery/Pot type

Traps removed by WDFW sweeps 2018-2024



*This reflects summer gear sweep efforts through 10/1 each season. Criteria for "owner identifiable" is the legal definition in 2021.*



# 2024 Year in review

## **Comanager Technical Working Group**

- Starting in Spring 2024, WDFW and Puget Sound treaty tribes formed a new comanager shellfish technical working group (TWG) – defines a process to address substantive comanager technical disagreements
- TWG initial focus on documenting and updating recreational crab catch estimation methodology – restarting discussions in spring after a winter break (following NOF conclusion)

## **Year Ahead**

- Creel Monitoring – moving creel location focus to MAs 9 and 11; limited baseline coverage in 2E; Long-term – additional resources needed to grow crab creel program to meet our monitoring goals
- Research/Collaborations – Pacific Northwest Crab Research Group (PCRG) – light traps; environmental monitoring in test fisheries; collaborations with academia
- Advisory Groups – new terms in 2025 for both rec crab and shrimp and commercial crab advisory groups



# Questions?

