



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

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December 21, 2017

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab Fisher:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information regarding the opening of the 2017-18 coastal Dungeness crab fishery in the area south of Klipsan Beach, Washington and preliminary information on the opening in the area north of Klipsan Beach.

The most recent test fishing results necessary to inform the opening south of Klipsan Beach shows that meat recovery results are below the minimum standard of 23 percent. In addition, crab tested in northern Oregon, southern Oregon and northern California are also still below the minimum meat recovery standard.

Policy leaders from Washington, Oregon, and California met today to discuss these results and agreed to delay the **opening in the area from Klipsan Beach, Washington to Point Arena California until 9:00 A.M. January 15, 2018. There will be a gear set period beginning at 8:00 A.M. on January 12, 2018.** The season opening for the area south of Cape Blanco, Oregon is pending additional biotoxin testing to show that domoic acid levels are below the federal standard. If areas are delayed beyond January 15 due to high domoic acid levels, fair start provisions will apply.

In addition, WDFW has finalized harvest management agreements with the Makah and Quileute Tribes and the Quinault Indian Nation for the 2017-2018 season. These Harvest Management Plans include provisions that affect the state season opening in areas north of Klipsan Beach.

Klipsan Beach to Destruction Island

The state season opening in the area from Klipsan Beach to Destruction Island is determined based on the Quinault head-start period. In the past, the number of head start days were negotiated based on historical catch and the results of harvest sharing recognizing that decisions on the appropriate number of head start days were made with little to no information on crab abundance or other variables that are unknown prior to the season opening. This year's management plan takes an approach that uses preliminary catch information from the Quinault fishery to provide insight on crab abundance to inform the number of head-start days. State and Quinault managers have explored historical catch data and found a strong correlation with average Quinault landings during the first 25 to 30 days of their season and the final harvest sharing results. A sliding scale approach was developed that defines crab abundance as high, medium or low based on

catch after the first 31 days of the Quinault season. In general, we have found that if crab abundance is low, the state fleet may not have the opportunity to catch their share of the crab in the Quinault U&A and a shorter head-start is necessary. Alternatively, if crab abundance is high, the state fleet can catch their share much quicker and can exceed their harvest share suggesting the need for a longer Quinault head-start period. The sliding scale approach will allow state and Quinault managers to implement a more informed head-start period based on preliminary information on crab abundance.

Under the 2017-2018 management plan, the minimum number of head-start days is 45 and the maximum is 49 days. Based on the Quinault season opening of December 7, 2017 we know that the earliest the state crab fishery could open is January 24 and would open no later than January 28th, 2018 with a gear set period preceding the opening. WDFW and Quinault will meet on January 10, 2018 to make a final decision on the season opening based on a joint evaluation of the Quinault early season catch data and will be announced no later than January 11, 2018.

The Quinault SMA is not changed from what was in place during the 2016-2017 season. However, WDFW and Quinault managers will continue to track inseason catch and consider inseason changes as necessary.

North of Queets River and Destruction Island

The Harvest Management Plans with the Quileute and Makah Tribes for 2017-2018 were not changed from what was in place for the 2016-2017 season. The State-Quileute agreement again includes a provisions that guides when the area between the Queets River and Destruction Island is open based on Quileute catch in the entire Quileute U&A. At this time, given low early season catch for Quileute, the area between Queets and Destruction Island will open concurrently with the opening established by the Quinault head start. The season opening for the area north of Destruction Island will not open before January 15, 2018 and could be delayed if needed to provide the Quileute Tribe with 20 fishable days. WDFW will provide an update to confirm the season opening date north of Destruction Island as soon as the fishable day criteria has been finalized.

Below are details relative to the season opening that include; gear set, opening, and hold inspection dates, and fair start provisions. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the management measures described below before you begin your fishing operations and stay informed relative to additional changes.

OPENING DATES

Klipsan Beach to WA/OR Border including Willapa Bay:

The coastal Dungeness crab fishery will open to state fishers from Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) to the WA/OR border (46°15.00), including Willapa Bay (*note the western boundary description), on **January 15, 2018**.

- **A 73-hour gear pre-set period starting at 8:00 A.M., January 12, 2018 will precede the opening.**
- **Vessel hold inspections will be conducted on January 14, 2018, starting at noon.**
- **Fishers can begin fishing in this area at 9:00 A.M. on January 15, 2018**
- Fishers participating in the fishery south of Klipsan Beach or in Willapa Bay are subject to reduced pot limits. Fishers with permanent pot limits of 500 and 300 will be allowed to use 400 or 250 pots, respectively. Unused buoy tags must be on board vessels until the temporary pot limit is lifted.
- Vessels that fish in the area between Point Arena, CA and Klipsan Beach or in Willapa Bay before the ocean area north of Klipsan Beach opens are subject to the fair start provisions described below.
- The boundary between the Willapa Bay and the ocean waters is distinguished by a straight line connecting the following coordinates:

*Cape Shoalwater: 46°44.76 N - 124°05.76 W

Leadbetter Point: 46°38.93 N - 124°04.33 W

Klipsan Beach to Destruction Island:

WDFW will provide a confirmation on the state season opening in the area between Klipsan Beach and Destruction Island no later than January 11, 2018 which will include details on special management area (SMA) boundaries and closure dates.

Destruction Island to U.S.-Canadian Border:

The state commercial fishery from Destruction Island to the U.S. Canadian border will not open before **January 15, 2018**. We will provide you with follow-up information with the specific regulations including Makah and Quileute SMA boundaries and closure periods for this area as soon as possible.

FAIR START PROVISIONS:

Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-52-036) in the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the waters from Point Arena, California, to Klipsan Beach, Washington, (including Willapa Bay) are subject to the **Fair Start Provisions** described below.

- **Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) to Oysterville (46°33.00):** Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-52-036) in the fishery between Point Arena, CA and Klipsan Beach, WA, including Willapa Bay, before the area north of Klipsan Beach opens will not be allowed to fish in the area between Klipsan Beach and Oysterville until **10 days** after the area north of Klipsan opens.

- **Oysterville (46°33.00) to Destruction Island:** Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-52-036) in the fishery between Point Arena, CA and Klipsan Beach, WA, including Willapa Bay, before the area north of Oysterville opens will not be allowed to fish in the area between Oysterville and Destruction Island until **35 days** after the area north of Klipsan opens.
- **WAC 220-52-036 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.

Other Requirements:

- All license holders will be required to carry, complete, and submit logbooks to WDFW. This information will greatly assist us in managing our fishery in the future.
- Notification to WDFW Enforcement is required when transiting crab through closed areas. Notification is to be made 24-hours prior to entering the area north of 47°00.00 N. Latitude by calling Capt. Dan Chadwick at 360-4581-3337, and reporting the vessel name, operator name, estimated amount of crab to be delivered in pounds, and the estimated date, time, and location of delivery. The following situations will require notification.
 - a. Vessels transiting north of Grays Harbor with crab caught south of Klipsan beach (46°28.00) or Willapa Bay prior to the area north of Klipsan beach opening.
 - b. Vessels transiting north of Grays Harbor with crab caught south of Destruction Island (47°40.50) prior to the area north of Destruction Island opening.
- A **Washington Gear Transfer Permit** issued by WDFW is required to transport through Washington State waters, crab pots or buoys bearing the tags issued by another state. Contact Captain Dan Chadwick at 360-581-3337 for issuance of this permit.
- A hold inspection certificate number is required on all fish tickets until further notice.
- WDFW would like your help, please call the coastal crab hotline (360-249-4628, extension 260) if you witness or have information regarding enforcement

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violations including fishing in closed areas, starting early, pots without buoy tags, etc.

This information and future updates will also be available on WDFW web page:

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

If you have questions regarding the information contained in this letter or other regulations pertaining to the coastal Dungeness crab fishery, please contact Dan Ayres at (360) 249-4628 ext. 209.

I appreciate the input provided by industry Tri-State representatives, advisors, and industry members that participated in the many discussions and provided input throughout the season opening process. Best wishes for a safe and successful crab season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Reed". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'H' and 'R'.

Heather Reed

Intergovernmental Ocean Policy

cc: Michele Culver
Annette Hoffmann
Dan Ayres