



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

48 Devonshire Road, Montesano, Washington 98563-9618 (360) 249-4628 FAX (360) 249-1229

December 8, 2011

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab Fisher:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with preliminary information regarding the opening of the 2011-2012 coastal Dungeness crab fishery. Washington, Oregon and California have all completed pre-season test fishing necessary to set the season opening date. The latest round of test fishing results indicate that crab condition criteria has been met in Washington and most of Oregon. The area between Klipsan Beach, Washington and southern Oregon near Gold Beach (42° 26' N. Lat) will open on December 15th with a gear set period beginning at 8:00 am on December 12, 2011. Crab condition in southern Oregon and northern California is not project to achieve the minimum requirements needed to open the fishery in time for an opening on December 15 or January 1 so the season opening in the area between 42° 26' N. Lat. and Point Arena, California will be delayed until January 15th.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has finalized management agreements with the Makah and Quileute Tribes. However, discussions with the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) remain on-going. Because discussions with QIN have not been completed we have not finalized the details relative to the state season opening in the area north of Klipsan Beach, WA. We intend to open this area between January 15 and January 27 pending the outcome of our final discussions with QIN. We will send a follow up letter as soon as possible with complete information on the opening in this area.

Input from the coastal Dungeness crab Advisory Board and members of the coastal crab industry provided at today's meeting was very valuable as we work to set a state season opening structure in the area north of Klipsan Beach that is in line with our harvest sharing requirements with our tribal co-managers. This season's opening presents challenges just like any other year and we truly value the opportunity to meet with the fishing industry and discuss the current situation as we work to develop an agreeable harvest management plan with the Quinault Indian Nation.

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 AND FAIR START PROVISIONS:

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 **December 15, 2011**. A 64-hour gear pre-set period starting at 8:00 AM, December 12, 2011 will precede the opening. Vessel hold inspections will be conducted on December 14, 2011, starting at noon. Fishers can begin fishing in this area at 12:01 a.m. on December 15, 2011.

- 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 and/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:

The opening date for this area has not been determined. We intend to open this area between January 15 and January 27 pending the outcome of our final discussions with QIN. We will provide you with an additional letter containing the specific regulations for this area as soon as possible.

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, 2012**. The opening in this area may be delayed past January 15 as necessary to provide 20 fishable days between December 1, 2011 and January 15, 2012 and/or to provide an opening consistent with opening for the area between Klipsan Beach and Destruction Island. We will provide you with an additional letter containing the specific regulations for this area as soon as possible.

Fair Start Provisions:

- **Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) to Oysterville (46°33.00):** Vessels that fish between Point Arena, CA and Klipsan Beach, WA, including Willapa Bay, before the area north of

Klipsan Beach opens will be not be allowed to fish in the area between Klipsan Beach and Oysterville until **10-days** after the area from Klipsan Beach to Oysterville opens.

- **Oysterville (46°33.00) to U.S. - Canadian Border:** Vessels that participate 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 U.S. - Canadian border until **35-days** after the area from Oysterville to Destruction Island opens.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS:

Quileute:

The Quileute SMA will be closed to state fishers beginning immediately upon the opening of the state fishery in the area from Destruction Island to U.S. Canadian border. The Quileute SMA will open to state fishers beginning at 8:00 AM, May 1, 2012.

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 - 124°40.40
- Northwest Corner; 47°58.00 N. - 124°49.00W.
- Southwest Corner; 47°40.50 N. - 124°40.00'W.
- Southeast Corner; Destruction Island 47°40.50 - 124° 24.43

There will be a 100-pot limit in the SMA from May 1, 2012, through May 31, 2012. Fishers must pre-register with WDFW prior to deploying gear in this area.

Makah SMA:

The Makah SMA will be closed to state fishers immediately upon the opening of the state fishery in the area between Destruction Island and U.S. Canadian border and will remain closed for 30-days.

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 pre-register with WDFW prior to deploying gear in this area.

The Makah SMA is described as the coastal waters between 48°02.15N. to 48°19.50N. 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. – 124°50.45 W.
- Southwest Corner; 48°02.15 N. – 124°50.45 W.
- Southeast Corner, 48°02.15 N. – 124°41.00 W.

Other Requirements:

- a. Vessels not designated on a coastal Dungeness crab fishery license are permitted to transport or deploy up to 250 pots during the pre-soak period. The primary operator of the vessel associated with the pots being transported must be aboard the vessel while they are being deployed.
- b. 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.
- c. 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 360-581-3337, 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.
- d. A hold inspection certificate number is required on all fish tickets through February 29, 2012.
- e. WDFW would like your help, please call the coastal crab hotline (360-249-4628, extension 260) if you witness or have information regarding enforcement 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/fish/shelfish/crabreg/comcrab/coast/>

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.

Thank you for your patience as we continue to work through this year's preseason management process.

Sincerely,

Coastal Dungeness Crab Fisher

December 8, 2011

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

Heather Reed

Coastal Marine Resources Policy Coordinator

cc: Phil Anderson
Michele Culver
Ron Warren
Kirt Hughes
Dan Ayres