



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

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

December 21, 2015

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab Fisher:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with details on the 2015-16 Washington coastal Dungeness crab season opening. Policy makers from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife met today to discuss the latest round of domoic acid testing and details regarding the opening of the coastal Dungeness crab fishery. As you know, the season opening has been delayed coastwide to collect domoic acid samples to ensure that when the crab fishery opens that crab coming into the market place will be safe and to provide for a coordinated season opening.

Domoic acid levels in crab sampled in Oregon and Washington is below the U.S Food and Drug Administration action levels and managers agreed to open the coast in areas where domoic acid is not an issue. As a result, the commercial fishery will open from Destruction Island, Washington to the Oregon-California border on January 4, 2016. A gear set period will precede the opening beginning at 8:00 am on January 1, see complete details below. The latest round of domoic acid tests in California continue to show domoic acid levels above health agency thresholds and the fishery in California will continue to be delayed.

Complete domoic acid testing results in crab can be found on our web site at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/letters_notices.html under general information on the right side of the page.

Season Opening

The commercial Dungeness crab fishery will open from Destruction Island, Washington (47° 40.50) to the Oregon-California border including Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor at 9:00 A.M. January 4, 2016.

- A 73-hour gear pre-set period starting at 8:00 A.M., January 1, 2016 will precede the opening.
- Vessel hold inspections will be conducted on January 3, 2016, starting at noon.
- Fishers can begin fishing in this area at 9:00 A.M. on January 4, 2016.
- It is permissible for a vessel not designated on a Dungeness crab coastal fishery license to transport or deploy up to 250 pots at any one time for deployment in the coastal crab fishery between Destruction Island, Washington (47° 40.50) the Washington / Oregon Border. The primary or alternate operator of the crab pot gear named on the license associated with the gear must be on board the vessel when the gear is being deployed. Such a vessel may deploy crab pot gear only during the 73-hour period immediately

preceding the season opening date and during the 48-hour period immediately following the season opening date. All other provisions of the permanent rule remain in effect.

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.

The area between Destruction Island and the U.S. - Canada border will not open prior to January 15, 2015. The harvest management plan with the Quileute Tribe includes a provision to ensure that there are twenty fishable days for Quileute fishers between December 1 and January 15, prior to opening the state fishery north of Destruction Island. Details regarding the opening north of Destruction Island will be provided in a future letter when the specific opening date has been determined.

Fair Start provisions will be in place for the delayed fishery in California. Vessels that participate in the fishery between the Oregon-California border and Destruction Island, including Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor, before the area south of the Oregon-California border opens, will not be allowed to fish south of Oregon-California border until 30-days after the California fishery opens.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS:

Quinault:

The Quinault **primary SMA** will be closed to state fishers beginning at 8:00 AM January 1, 2016. The **primary SMA** is scheduled to remain closed to state fishers until 8:00 am February 29, 2016.

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:

- Northeast Corner: 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: 47°08.00' N. Lat. – 124°11.20' W. Lon.

A Quinault **secondary SMA (SSMA)** will be established on 8:00 am February 29, 2016 to include the area shoreward of a line approximating the 27-fathom depth curve between the mouth of the Copalis River (47°08.00) and Split Rock (47°24.50) according to the following coordinates:

- Northeast Corner (Split Rock): 47°24.50' N. Lat. 124°20.00' W. Lon.
- Northwest Corner: 47°24.50' N. Lat. 124°32.40' 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.

When the area between Split Rock and Raft River opens, state fishers must pre-register with WDFW prior to deploying gear in this area. Specific details regarding SMA openings and pot limits will be made available prior to opening.

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°40.50 N. Latitude by calling Sgt. Tony Leonetti at 360-485-8149, 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 situation will require notification:
 - a. Vessels transiting north of Destruction Island with crab caught south of Destruction Island prior to the opening in the area north of Destruction Island.
- A hold inspection certificate number is required on all fish tickets through February 10, 2016.
- 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/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.

Each season opening presents its own set of challenges and this year was no different. I appreciate the input and support from the Coastal Dungeness crab Advisory Board and industry members during this year's season setting process. I hope you have a safe and successful 2015-16 crab season.

Sincerely,



Heather Reed
Coastal Marine Resources Policy Coordinator

cc: Michele Culver
Steve Thiesfeld
Dan Ayres