



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

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

November 24, 2015

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab License Owner:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with final details relative to the 2015-16 coastal Dungeness crab fishery.

Season Opening South of Klipsan Beach, Washington

Fishery managers from The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) have agreed to delay the opening of the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery from Klipsan Beach, Washington to the Oregon - California border through at least December 15, 2015. This decision was made together with managers from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) who announced a closure off California earlier.

The delay is needed to provide fishery managers and health officials in all three states time to conduct domoic acid testing on more crab samples collected from additional areas. These tests will help ensure that when the fishery does open, the crab coming to the marketplace will be safe. The season opening decision in this area will continue to be coordinated with ODFW and CDFW following the Tri-State process as much as possible in order to provide for a coordinated season opening with Oregon and California. We will provide you with more information on the opening south of Klipsan Beach as domoic acid testing is completed along the coast.

Season Opening North of Klipsan Beach, Washington

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) have recently agreed to the terms of a Harvest Management Agreement for the 2015-16 season. WDFW has also finalized management agreements with the Makah and Quileute Tribes. The specific details of locations of the agreed to Special Management Areas (SMA), and the dates they are closed to non-tribal fishers are provided below.

The 2015-16 management agreement with QIN allows for a state season opening on January 4, 2016 with gear set scheduled for January 1, 2016. The Quinault season opened on November 19, 2015. The Primary Special Management Area (PSMA) will be closed to state fishermen until 8:00 a.m. February 29, 2016 (see details below). The agreement for the 2015-2016 season will continue to apply the inseason management approach that was used last season. State and QIN fishery managers and policy makers

will meet in late January to discuss preliminary harvest sharing results. The purpose of this meeting is to evaluate state and QIN catch early in the season and gauge the potential need for inseason adjustments. Our goal is to achieve balanced sharing of the crab resources in our co-managed area and both state and QIN managers are committed to discussing and implementing inseason adjustments early on if harvest sharing is significantly off track.

The provisions in the agreements with Makah and Quileute are the same as those that have been in place in recent years.

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, 2016. The harvest management plan with the Quileute Tribe includes a provision to ensure that there are 20 fishable days for Quileute fishers between December 1 and January 15th 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.

- **The state coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery between Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) and Destruction Island will open at 12:01 am, January 4, 2016.**
- A **64-hour** gear pre-set period will begin at 8:00 am January 1, 2016.
- **Hold inspections** will be conducted starting at noon on January 3, 2016.
- Temporary pot limits in place south of Klipsan Beach will be removed at 8:00 am January 1, 2016.

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.

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) before January 4, 2016 are subject to Fair Start Provisions, **which will be provided in a follow up letter.**

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 or the alternate 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 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:

- i. 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.
- d. A hold inspection certificate number is required on all fish tickets through February 8, 2016.
- 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/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/>

In addition, at the same link you will find the results of the 2015 pre-season test fishing for meat quality and shell conditions listed under “General Information.”

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 and support from the Coastal Dungeness crab Advisory Board and industry members during this year’s test fishing and 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