



May 5, 2017

Oregon Ocean Commercial Dungeness Crab Permit Holders and Interested Persons,

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Sea Grant, and the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission are sending you this letter to:

- Let you know about the increase in reported whale entanglements documented on the U.S. West Coast;
- Describe the new efforts that Oregon stakeholders are beginning to take to address this issue and how you might get involved; and
- Provide guidance on best fishery practices to use this season, as we work together to collaboratively address this issue for the long term.

RECENT HAPPENINGS

In the past three years, NOAA Fisheries has observed an increase in the number of reported whales entangled in fishing gear from fixed gear fisheries along the West Coast, primarily in Dungeness crab gear. In some cases, entanglement in fishing gear has led to serious injury and directly caused death of whales. A summary of recent entanglement information is included in this mailer and is available on NOAA Fisheries website:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/marine_mammals/fisheries_interactions.html.

Last month, the Pacific States Marine Fish Commission (PSMFC) hosted a two-day workshop with industry, marine mammal experts, environmental organizations and state and federal fishery managers from along the entire west coast region to discuss the latest science in reducing entanglements. Discussions focused on generating and prioritizing ideas for new gear and fishing practices to minimize whale entanglement on the west coast. A summary of the discussion and all presentations from this workshop are posted on the PSMFC website at

<http://www.psmfc.org/crab/>.

UPCOMING WORKING GROUP FOR OREGON SOLUTIONS – SUMMER 2017

To continue the momentum generated by this regional workshop and address the issue directly, Oregon Sea Grant will be convening a collaborative whale entanglement working group in Oregon this year. The Oregon working group will coordinate with the California Dungeness

Crab Fishing Gear Working Group, which was convened in 2015 (<http://www.opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group/>).

The Oregon working group objective is to gather Oregon stakeholders together to develop options for short- and long-term modifications to gear and fishery practices to reduce the risk of whale entanglements in Dungeness crab gear and other fixed gear. This will strengthen the ability of Oregon's Dungeness crab fishery to adapt and thrive under changing ecological and socioeconomic conditions. Additionally, the working group recommendations will ensure that the unique characteristics of Oregon's Dungeness crab fishery are represented in the West Coast regional efforts to reduce whale entanglements in fixed gear fisheries. The working group is seeking additional representatives from the recreational crab fishery and commercial fishermen based from areas of the coast outside of Astoria and Newport. If you are interested in learning more about the working group, and/or participating please contact Amanda Gladics Amanda.Gladics@oregonstate.edu (541) 503-325-8573 ext. 265.

WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

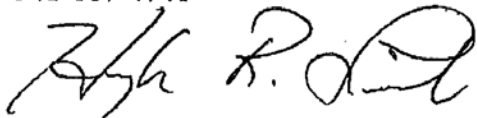
When you are participating in the Dungeness crab fishery (in other words, any time that you have crab pots in the ocean), we encourage you to help minimize the risk of entanglement by **reducing the amount of lines in the water** when possible and implementing best fishing practices. Specifically consider the following in-season best fishing practices:

- a. Remove all your gear as soon as you have completed your crab season. Do this as quickly and efficiently as possible (avoid "storing gear" in the ocean).
- b. Remove all your gear if your vessel is inoperable. If your vessel is unable to actively operate and you still have crab pots in the water please contact ODFW licensing 503-947-6116 about applying for a one-time retrieval waiver to allow another vessel to help get your pots out of the water as soon as possible.
- c. Retrieve derelict, lost or stray pots, in accordance with derelict gear recovery rules (OAR 635-005-0490), and make sure to record the information in your logbook according to the instructions. (See information on the post-season program, below).
 - Please remember that it is unlawful at this time to stop transit of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA), even to pick up derelict gear, when on a declared bottom trawl or fixed gear groundfish fishing trip.
- d. Implement best fishing practices in the configuration and deployment of gear; for example, minimize the amount of scope, floating line and trailer buoys as possible. The Oregon working group (mentioned above) plans to develop best fishing practices for Oregon, using the attached best practices guide and other materials as a starting point.
- e. Post-Season: Sign-up and participate in the permitted post-season derelict gear program to retrieve derelict and stray pots still in the ocean after the season ends. The details about how this program operates and the requirements to participate can be found at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/psdgrp.asp>.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, Oregon Sea Grant, and the Oregon Dungeness crab industry recognize that proactively addressing whale entanglements will contribute to potential benefits to whale populations and the greater resilience of the economically and culturally important crab fishery. Therefore, we are committed to working together to reduce the risk of whale entanglements in fixed gear fisheries in Oregon. We look forward to working with you to collaboratively address this problem.



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