



Commercial Dungeness Crab Newsletter

September 6, 2007

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
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2006 - 07 Season Summary:

Figure 1: Landings (millions of lbs) per Dungeness crab season, 1947 - 2007.

Commercial Dungeness crab landings (as of June 24) have surpassed the 15 million pound mark. While not considered a large harvest when compared with the previous three record-breaking seasons, the catch this season is well above the average annual harvest of just over 10 million pounds (dashed line).

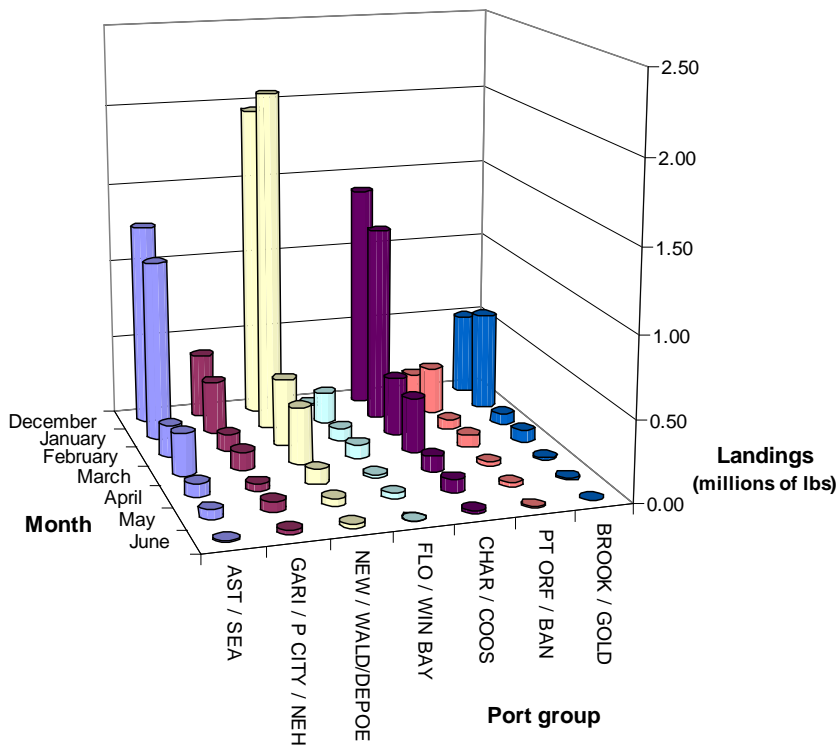
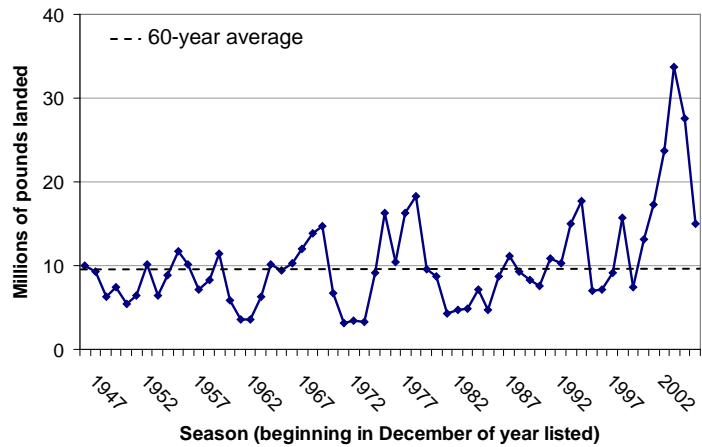


Figure 2: Landings in pounds, by port area by month, for the 2006-07 Dungeness crab season.

Port performance in the Dungeness fishery is led by the Newport area with a seven-month (December – June) landings total of just over 5 million lbs, followed by the Charleston/Coos Bay area at 3.5 million lbs. Astoria/Seaside has a seven-month landings total of nearly 3 million lbs.

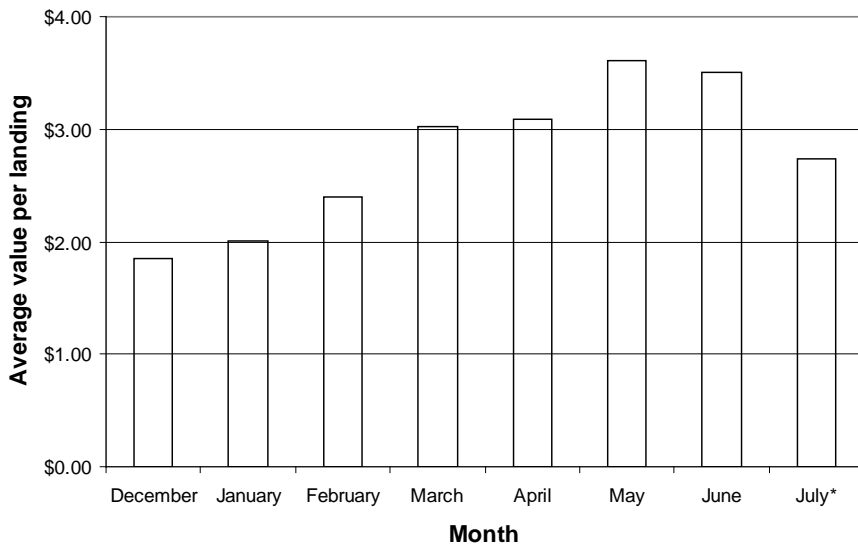


Figure 3: Average ex-vessel value (price per pound) of Dungeness crab landed for the 2006-07 season.

The average ex-vessel price of Dungeness crab increased steadily in the first months of the season, declining to just under three dollars in early July (*data current through 24 July).

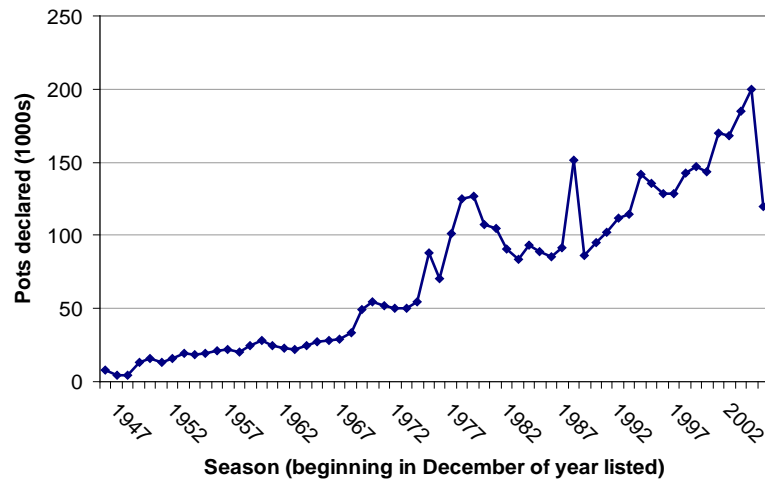


Figure 4: Pot declarations in the Dungeness crab fishery per season.

Effect of the pot limit program is reflected in the number of pots declared this past season. Implementation of pot limits resulted in a declared pot total of around 120,000. An estimated high of 200,000 declared pots was reached in the 2005-2006 fishery season.

Communication on the Issues

Several opportunities exist for those crabbers who are interested in voicing their opinions to the Department on issues of interest in Dungeness crab fishery management. Unfortunately, the 'Heads-Up' website is now offline, but there are still many alternative ways to make your voice heard:

E-mail ODFW at: crab.pots@state.or.us:

Opinions, ideas, and requests for information can be sent to ODFW using the email address: crab.pots@state.or.us. This site is currently being used for communicating proposed stacking ideas and to list concerns about the process. All persons with ideas for stacking or with concerns about proposals are encouraged to write to ODFW at the 'crab.pots' web address. Calls, letters and visits are also welcome.

Contact your port Advisory Committee representative:

ODFW seeks the input of the fleet by consulting with several advisory groups. Membership in the groups (listed on page 3) is voluntary. ODFW tries to represent all sectors of the fleet by having all ports and a diversity of business plan types represented on all committees. We conduct the meetings with a conference call option to accommodate advisors at sea or who are unable to attend in person.

- **Oregon Dungeness Crab Advisory Committee (ODCAC)**

This committee serves as a standing advisory council to ODFW on all relevant crab policy issues. Issues that ODCAC is currently discussing include pot limit implementation, Tri-state issues and enforcement issues.

Oregon Dungeness Crab Advisory Committee (ODCAC)			
<u>Members</u>	<u>Port/Org.</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Port/Org.</u>
Chris Aiello	Port Orford	Les Anderson	Port Orford
Jimmy Burns	Coos Bay	John Corbin	Astoria
Jerry Bates	Newport	Mike Lane	Bandon
Doug Brown	Garibaldi	Rex Leach	Coos Bay
Mark Charlton	Warrenton	Hugh Link	ODCC
Jack Emmons	Hallmark	Mike Manning	Blaine Crab
Jeff Feldner	OR Sea Grant	Heather Mann/Rod Moore	WCPA
Steve Fick	Fishhawk	Al Pazar	ODCC
Mike Griffith	Brookings	Darus Peake	Garibaldi
Bob Eder	Newport	Bob Spellbrink	Newport
Scott Hartzell	Florence	Tom Nowlin	Coos Bay
Doug Heater	Bornstein's	Blaine Steinmetz	Port Orford
Al Gann	Warrenton	Joe Speir	Brookings
Todd Whaley	Brookings	Dave Wright	Pacific Seafood

- **Pot/Permit Stacking Committee**

The pot stacking committee was responsible for developing draft permit stacking proposals to be brought for the entire fleet's input at the Crab Summit this past July. Committee membership was composed of crabbers from all tier levels and from all main ports. More details on the Crab Summit and the stacking proposals can be found on page 7.

Stacking Committee Advisors			
<u>Members (Tier)</u>	<u>Port/Org.</u>	<u>Members (Tier)</u>	<u>Port/Org.</u>
Eric Huddleston (200)	Warrenton	Mike Lane (300)	Bandon
Mark Charlton (500)	Warrenton	Chris Aiello (300)	Port Orford
Doug Creasy (200)	Bay City	Blane Steinmetz (300)	Port Orford
Darus Peake (300)	Garibaldi	Ralph Dairy (200)	Brookings
Jerry Bates (2, 3, 500)	Newport	Mike Manning (300)	Brookings
Chris Martinson (500)	Newport	Joe Speir (3, 3, 500)	Brookings
Scott Hartzell (500)	Florence	Todd Whaley (3, 500)	Brookings
Jimmy Burns (500)	Coos Bay	Hugh Link	ODCC
Rex Leach (200)	Coos Bay	Jeff Feldner (300)	OR Sea Grant

- **Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee Representatives**

Advisory delegates to the Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee are industry representatives nominated by the fleet and appointed by ODFW to represent their port and Oregon at the Tri-State Meetings. Alternate representatives for each port are designated with an (A). These advisors work on pre-season testing protocols and other topics involving inter-state negotiations.

Tri-State Advisors			
<u>Members</u>	<u>Port</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Port</u>
Les Anderson	Port Orford	Vacant position	North Coast
Bob Eder	Newport	Al Gann (A)	Warrenton
Robert Spelbrink (A)	Newport	Joe Speir	Brookings
Tom Nowlin	Coos Bay	Todd Whaley (A)	Brookings
Rex Leach (A)	Coos Bay		

ODFW Marine Program staff contact information:

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Rule Changes

In-season pot limit implementation actions

In order to try to accommodate business needs during this first year of fishing under pot limits, a few of the pot limit rules were adjusted prior to the season opening and in the first few months of the season. These rule changes were:

Temporary rules to remove 5-year wait for permit transfers:

- Now in effect: from 4/17/07 – 10/13/07
- Was also in effect: from 9/8/06 – 11/24/06

Temporary rule to transit Oregon waters with unmarked pots:

- Required 48 hours written notice to ODFW
- Was in effect from 12/1/06 – 3/7/07

Rules limiting Oregon permits to Oregon waters (also known as 'LE 200'):

- Oregon permits are valid only in state and federal waters off Oregon.
- Temporary rule in effect: 1/1/07 – 6/29/07
- Permanent rule adopted by OFWC on June 8, 2007
- Completes LE 200 for the tri-state fishery. Fishing in waters (0-200 mi) off a state now requires a crab permit issued by that state.

Rules giving Director the authority to issue replacement buoy tags in circumstances involving extraordinary events:

- Temporary rule was in effect 12/26/06 – 6/15/07
 - Buoy tags replaced if lost due to extraordinary circumstances that were unavoidable
 - Buoy Tag Replacement Advisory Board specified in rule. It made a recommendation to the Director on whether to replace tags.
 - Three requests were received for tag replacement under extraordinary circumstances. One of these requests was approved.
- Permanent rule adopted by OFWC on June 8, 2007:
 - Adjusted the rule language to allow for greater flexibility and a quicker turnaround time for tag replacement requests. The advisory board and procedures are the same, but are not written in rule.
- To receive replacement tags, the owner must demonstrate:
 - Reasonable diligence in preventing the loss
 - Reasonable effort has been made to recover the lost gear
 - Circumstances under which the tags were lost was due to an extraordinary event

Temporary rule to allow for crab gear retrieval by any commercial vessel between September 1 and October 31, 2007 (see page 9 for additional information on this temporary rule)

Upcoming Events Calendar

October 12, 2007 Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting: At ODFW HQ (3406 Cherry Avenue NE, Salem, OR 97303. Items with potential rule changes affecting the commercial ocean Dungeness crab fishery focus on improving implementation of the new crab pot limit regulation. Details on the proposed rule changes are listed below on pages 5-6. The Commission will also be briefed on the results of the 2007 Crab Summit/pot-permit stacking discussions. Exhibits and meeting information can be found at: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission/minutes/>

October 2007 Tri-state Dungeness Crab Meeting: Date and location to be determined. Potential topics are: season start regulations, WA buy-back update and tri-state buoy brand options. Information on this meeting will be posted on the ODFW web site when the meeting is set: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/announcements/>

October 2007 Fish and Wildlife Commission Action

Pot limit implementation improvements will be proposed to the Fish and Wildlife Commission in October 2007 for permanent adoption. If adopted, these changes will be in effect for the 2007-2008 season. The intent of these actions is to assist the fleet in its adjustment to the pot limit program and to assist OSP in its enforcement of the pot limits regulations. ODFW has been working with ODCAC members, Crab Summit participants and with OSP on all these proposals. Possible actions are briefly summarized in the following paragraphs:

1. Modify the information and layout of buoy tags (no rule change needed)

Several changes to the information printed on buoy tags have been requested by fishers. These changes include placing either or both the vessel's name and phone number on the tag, and increasing the size of the tag number for greater visibility. At an ODCAC meeting, a new version of the tag was approved by the advisors after their input and reports from their ports. Both old and new tag layouts are pictured below. The vessel name will be added to the tag and the tier number removed. Tier colors for 2007-08 season are: 200 (light pink), 300 (bright pink), and 500 (bright blue). Replacement tags will be red.



Old Tag

Tag #
Vessel
Permit #
Season



New Versions

2. Buoy number/brand marking

Currently, buoy numbers must be visible and legible. However, if not branded into the buoy, the number is sometimes washed or eroded away during the season. This rule change will require that buoy numbers be **permanently** marked on buoys. The method used to achieve permanency is up to the individual.

3. Changes to standard (10%) tag replacement

Under current rules, up to 10% of a fisher's buoy tags can be replaced upon application after 45 days. In this proposed rule change, tag replacement would be allowed on the first business day after 30 days from the season start date. Designating the 'first business day' will prevent the replacement date from falling on the New Year's Day holiday or on a weekend. In addition, this action removes the requirement to report individual numbers of lost tags when requesting replacement tags.

4. Refine the definition of illegal gear

The rule prohibiting the 'use' of illegal gear types will be refined to include prohibiting the 'possession', 'control', and 'operation' of illegal gear types. This action applies only to those illegal gear types defined in OAR 635-005-0055 (2), (3) and (4), relating to maximum pot size, escape rings and escape mechanisms. Without this change, OSP would have to catch violators in the act of using illegal gear at sea before they could issue citations. As in the recent season, OSP will use its discretion when encountering situations where fishers are bringing in small amounts of obviously derelict gear.

5. Untended gear

Among the infractions reported to OSP this season were situations where gear from boats in drydock or from boats in use in other fisheries was being fished by another vessel. Also, boats reportedly left their crab gear in the water long after they stopped crab fishing for the season. The current proposal would require that, for every permit with gear in the water, a landing must be made every 14 days. Advisors recommended 14 days to avoid abuse in the peak weeks of each season. Enforcement would involve on-water observations of gear left for extended periods and OSP does not intend to issue citations based on landings records alone.

6. Require logbooks

The commercial Dungeness crab fishery is one of the only major fisheries not recording logbook information. Adopting logbooks for the ocean Dungeness crab fishery will provide necessary information for enhanced management of the fishery, and will have additional benefits for management and the industry as well. Information regarding the distribution and value of the resource by area as well as fishing effort is necessary to assess the potential impacts of offshore developments and ocean zoning. It is important to have a documented record of this distribution when making a case that certain grounds are important to the fishery. In addition, logbooks will be important for Marine Stewardship Council certification and pot limit program evaluations. Key logbook information will include: pot string location, number of pots and estimated pounds caught per string of pots. The catch per string of pots is necessary to obtain detailed data on Dungeness crab distribution. Logbook workgroup members were solicited at the July Crab Summit and August ODCAC meeting. This workgroup will assist ODFW in evaluating the performance of the initial logbook and in determining any appropriate changes for the next season's version. If you are interested in serving on this workgroup, contact us.

7. Shorten wait period for permit transfers

Permit transfer requirements have already been modified by temporary rules twice since pot limit were approved to allow fishers more time and opportunities to adjust to pot limits. This proposal would shorten the wait period permanently from 60 months to 18 months, while keeping the current boat length and landings requirements in place. The wait period is proposed to be shortened to 18 months rather than one year to prevent the transfer of permits from one vessel to another within the same season and to prevent taking advantage of delayed season starts.

Permit Stacking

When pot limit rules were adopted, the Fish and Wildlife Commission requested that ODFW staff develop proposals for a stacking program to be presented to the Commission the following year. The goal for developing a possible stacking program was to assist fishers to further adjust to the pot limit program. Pursuant to the Commission's request, the pot stacking committee, working with ODFW staff developed several draft proposals for consideration at the 2007 Crab Summit. The draft proposals included many options of program design. For all of the options, the permit purchased for stacking would be retired from the fishery. The four proposed pot limit programs considered at the Crab Summit are as follows:

A. Status Quo
 No stacking program is adopted. Difficulties arising from pot limit implementation are addressed through permit transfer rule changes.

B. 200 Tier Stacking
 Stacking is allowed for only those in the lowest tier. The owner of a 200-pot permit may purchase another 200-pot permit to obtain a 300-pot permit:
 $200 + 200 = 300$

C. New 400 Pot Tier
 Only permits with 200 or 300 pots would be allowed to stack. Any stacking will result in a maximum of 400 pots to maintain the advantage for those in the 500 pot tier. No one may stack up to the 500-pot tier.
 $200 + 200 = 300$
 $300 + 200 = 400$

D. New 700 Pot Tier
 All tiers may stack to a high tier of 700 pots.
 $200 + 200 = 300$
 $300 + 200 = 500$
 $500 + 300 = 700$
 $500 + 500 = 700$

At the Crab Summit, more options were developed by working groups. These options were:

Stacking Within Tiers
 No limited transfer permits are allowed to stack. Stacking occurs only within tiers.
 $200 + 200 = 300$
 $300 + 300 = 500$
 $500 + 500 = 700$

New Top Tier 650 Pots
 Two new tiers: 400 and 650 pots. Only one stack per permit in allowed combinations, except for 200-pot tier.
 $200 + 200 = 300$
 $200 + 300 = 400$
 $300 + 200 = 400$
 $300 + 300 = 500$
 $300 + 500 = 650$

Modified Option C
 Option C is modified to add another tier. No limited transfer permits may stack. Only one stack is allowed, except for those with 200 pots.
 $200 + 200 = 300$
 $200 + 300 = 400$
 $300 + 200 = 400$
 $300 + 300 = 450$

Several New Tiers, Top Tier 750 Pots
 Half the pots for the purchased permit are retired for all stacking combinations, except stacking of the 200 and 500 pot combinations is not allowed. Only one stack per permit, except for 200 pot tier.
 $200 + 200 = 300$ $200 + 300 = 350$
 $300 + 300 = 450$ $300 + 200 = 400$
 $300 + 500 = 550$ $500 + 300 = 650$
 $500 + 500 = 750$

Many New Tiers, Top Tier 750 Pots
 Half the pots for the purchased permit are retired for all stacking combinations. Only one stack per permit, except for 200 pot tier.
 $200 + 200 = 300$ $200 + 300 = 350$
 $300 + 300 = 450$ $300 + 200 = 400$
 $200 + 500 = 450$ $300 + 500 = 550$
 $500 + 200 = 600$ $500 + 300 = 650$
 $500 + 500 = 750$

As described in the earlier summary of the 2007 Crab Summit, there was no agreement on a program for stacking at this time. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will be briefed on the Summit discussions at their October 2007 meeting in Salem.

Washington Buyback

This spring, the Washington state Legislature passed a bill into law that requires the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to develop a coastal crab fishery buyback program, in consultation with the industry. WDFW must report the details of the program to the legislature by December 1, 2007. The goal of this program is to remove around 80 to 100 licenses from the Washington non-Tribal Dungeness crab fleet. The program may include the purchase of vessels. The legislature has not yet provided funding for this program, but requested WDFW to explore funding sources. No details are available yet on the design of the program.

A key provision of the Washington buyback legislation states that any such program 'must be designed to have a neutral impact on Dungeness crab **harvests** in the state and federal waters off the coasts of Oregon and California. As discussed at the Crab Summit, this will not assure neutral impact on the economics or fisheries of the other two states. ODFW is monitoring the development of the buyback program with the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission and WDFW staff. The Department will be evaluating the potential impacts, especially effort shifts, of such a program on the Oregon fishery.

2006-07 Derelict Gear Recovery



An unavoidable side-effect of fixed gear fishing is that occasionally gear is lost. Lost, stray or abandoned crab gear in the water can cause resource loss problems and navigational hazards for fishers and other ocean users and crab gear is expensive to replace. Pilot projects were conducted this year to determine the best methods for gear retrieval and to attempt to clear areas of known high concentrations of gear.

Two pilot gear-retrieval projects are collaborations between several organizations and are funded through a federal Marine Debris Program grant, matched with funds from the ODFW Restoration and Enhancement Program (R&E), the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission (ODCC) and the Oregon Salmon Commission (OSC). The other major partners in these projects include the Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee (OFCC), Oregon Sea Grant, Oregon State Police, US Coast Guard and Tyco International.

Some funds remain for additional gear retrieval to take place in September. Activities conducted to date have included:

1. Derelict gear reporting hotline

The ODCC set up a hotline (1-800-707-CRAB) to allow ocean users to report locations of stray or derelict gear. Location of the gear and other pertinent information is entered into a database, and will be utilized in future recovery efforts.

2. Cut-off pot recovery off of Astoria and Charleston

Areas near Charleston and Astoria were targeted for gear recovery efforts to maximize effectiveness and minimize habitat disturbance. These were known areas of habitat with high gear loss and low sea pen densities. Gear was successfully recovered by sweeping the designated areas with low-impact, specially designed grapples.

Charleston (F/V Apache)

- Trawled 1 nm²
- 19 pots recovered
- Large mass of seine line, meters of cable also recovered
- Local students and volunteers helped to identify bycatch from pots
- Port Liaison Project fisherman identified and contacted gear owners when possible
- Unusable pots had parts salvaged, then remainder was delivered to a waste transfer station

Astoria (F/V Cape St. James)

- Trawled an area of 1.2 mi²
- 42 total pots recovered (including one large tangle)
- Over 300 ft² of seine web, 800+ meters of line, and 600+ meters of cable were also recovered

3. Recovery of buoyed pots near Tillamook

Efforts also focused on testing methods of crab gear retrieval in an area of known high derelict gear concentration off Tillamook, Oregon. During early September 2006, the Oregon Salmon Commission chartered the F/V WB for two days to recover buoyed crab pots left after the season near Tillamook. Forty-two pots were recovered in this effort and returned to their owners, when possible. In November, 2006, the F/V WB also was chartered for one day to continue removing buoyed gear in this area. An additional 36 pots were recovered and returned to their owners, when possible.

4. Sacrificed trawl net recovery near undersea cables

Trawl fishermen are required by federal law to sacrifice their gear if snagged within a certain distance of undersea cables. For this recovery program, the Oregon Fisherman's Cable Commission spearheaded a recovery effort for trawl nets that had been sacrificed near undersea cables off the Oregon coast. The effort was directed by a Tyco cable engineer and conducted by fishermen aboard the F/V Seeker. Gear equal to 4.5 trawl nets and associated equipment was recovered during three days of effort. This was the first recovery of gear at depths deeper than 300 fathoms (1800 feet) and also the first effort to be conducted near undersea cables.

- Wirerope (main wire) (12,600') weighing 6,480 lbs
- Mudgear and nets (4) weighing 18,100 lbs
- Trawl doors (6) weighing 4,925 lbs
- Total gear weight of 29,505 lbs

New Temporary Rule for Off-Season Gear Recovery

Following discussion with industry advisors at the August ODCAC meeting, ODFW adopted a temporary rule to allow commercial vessels to retrieve crab gear in the ocean during September and October. In past years, it has been common practice for commercial vessels, including crabbers, trawlers, and trollers, to retrieve Dungeness crab gear and drop it off in a nearby port for the owner to pick up. The temporary rule allows this practice to resume during September and October. Under permanent rule, only the vessel with a crab permit may possess, use or control its gear (identifiable by buoy tags and pot tags), and it is unlawful for other vessels to do so. When the temporary rule expires on November 1, 2007, the permanent rule will be in effect again.

The temporary rule only applies to retrieval of crab gear used in the Dungeness crab fishery. Gear used for the other commercial crab fisheries, such as for box crab or tanner crab, is legally fishing and may only be retrieved by the permitted vessel. For these fisheries, crab gear is identifiable by buoys marked with "**BOX**" or "**TAN**" followed by a number. These numbers are registered with ODFW/OSP.

Fishermen who retrieve crab gear are encouraged to report the location and amount of gear recovered and port to the Crab Commission's toll-free gear reporting hotline: **1-800-707-CRAB (2722)**.

Scenes from the July, 2007 Crab Summit, Gold Beach, OR



*Please Provide Comments and Suggestions on this Newsletter to:
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