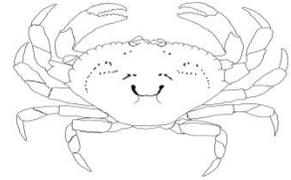




## ODCAC Conference Call

November 7, 2019



**Attendance:** Caren Braby, Kelly Corbett, Troy Buell, Brittany Harrington, Maggie Sommer, Al Gann, John Corbin, Doug Heater, Gary Motsinger, Bob Eder, Pogy Lapham, Justin Yager, Mikey Retherford, Clint Funderburg, John Moody, Scott Hartzell, Stuart Schuttpelz, Rex Leach, Rick Lilienthal, Tyler Long, Crystal Adams, Mike Lane, Paul Garrett, Aaron McKenzie, Bernie Lindley, Bill Manning, Brian Nolte, Mike Manning, Tim Novotny, Hugh Link, Susan Chambers, Ryan Howell, Todd Thompson, Amanda Gladics, Charles Kirschbaum

### Summary

- The meeting opened with introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda which included a season opening update, overview of October public meetings and whale entanglement risk reduction, and expansion of ODCAC group membership.
- Kelly Corbett provided a season opening update. Preseason testing results for all Oregon ports are below meat recovery criteria (20.3-22.3%). Crab were collected for domoic acid testing at all sites and results will be available in the next few days. There is a Tri-state call next Wednesday to discuss the season opening and delays.
- Caren Braby initiated a discussion about expanding/augmenting the ODCAC group to include any Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission (ODCC) or Oregon Whale Entanglement Working Group (OWEWG) members that aren't already ODCAC members, plus a representative from each of the marketing associations (both ports and statewide). This will make for a larger group, but will bring value to decisions made by ODFW.
  - ODCAC members spoke in support of expanding the group to include additional members. No ODCAC members objected to expanding the group.
  - Currently, there is a representative for the Oregon Coast Crab Association (OCCA) but none of the port marketing associations. Representatives from those associations are welcome to join by contacting ODFW.
- Caren provided an overview of the public meetings and efforts to address the whale entanglement issue. She opened with a discussion of risk including the risk of taking action (e.g., fleet disruptions, undue economic impacts, legal challenges) and the risk of not making changes (e.g., legal risk, public perception, coordination risk).
  - There was great attendance and participation at the public meetings in October. ODFW received survey input on entanglement risk reduction measures from about half of the meeting attendees.
  - All of the slides from the public meetings are posted on the new 'Reducing Risk of Whale Entanglements in Oregon Dungeness Crab Gear' tab on the ODFW website.
  - ODFW heard strong concerns, particularly safety concerns, about moving a lot of gear in April and even into May, and will be tabling two concepts (early closure and season intermission) at that time of year.

- A few ODCAC members expressed concerns about tabling the early closure option since it may be a significant way to reduce risk. Some members felt that it is not as unpopular of an option as we may think it is.
    - ODCAC members initiated some discussion about whether there is a safety concern around shortening the season or putting in a season intermission. Some members felt that safety concerns were an important consideration while others expressed frustration that safety concerns are always brought up when considering management changes in the fishery due to the nature of the business.
  - ODFW heard strong support for bringing the fishery into legal compliance with the ESA by developing a Conservation Plan (CP) and applying for an Incidental Take Permit (ITP). The agency is committed to moving forward with these.
  - ODFW heard frustration/interest in long term considerations related to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the possibility of humpback whales being de-listed. The agency has flagged this as an area of interest, but recognizes that it is a very long-term process.
  - ODFW is still committed to reducing the number of lines in the water and making significant strides in 2020, but a specific proposal (beyond what was brought to the public meetings) has not been determined. The agency is also committed to implementing a seasonal buoy tag in 2020 and some regulations to optimize gear configurations to reduce entanglement risk.
    - The agency is looking to develop an adaptive approach. The CP/ITP process will require triggers that allow for this.
  - ODFW is looking for input from the ODCAC group on the two week post-season gear clean-up period. It was eliminated by temporary rule during the 2018-19 season, but it is unclear how to move forward.
    - Several ODCAC members voiced support for eliminating the two week gear clean-up period at the end of the season.
- ODFW is taking steps now to evaluate input/surveys from public meetings, including conducting additional analyses that will be helpful to ODFW and industry to look at. The agency is also identifying FAQs from the public meetings and developing a document with responses that will be made available when completed. ODFW is also working to modify risk reduction measures and the approach presented at the public meetings, and plans to work with the ODCAC group over the next couple of months moving into a spring commission rulemaking.
  - A discussion followed on risk reduction measures. There was some support for both a percent reduction and a flat 200 pot limit, but no consensus. There was also no consensus on when risk reduction measures should be implemented but there was some agreement that June 1 was a good place to start. There was also a brief discussion about moving the summer trip limit requirement from the second Monday in June to June 1 to coincide with risk reduction measures if they were implemented at this time.
- ODCAC members initiated a discussion of modifying gear or configurations to reduce entanglement risk. Some gear configuration issues may be possible in the short term (e.g., taut lines, decreasing surface/trailing lines and surface buoys), while others would require more time (e.g., longlining).

- ODFW would like to lean on industry to identify areas where we can look at gear use and configurations to optimize it for operational efficiency and for reducing negative interactions with whales. Industry can help figure out what is viable and how to do it, without recreating problems that have already been eliminated.
- The OWEWG had good agreement that gear changes should only be pursued when industry/managers are confident that they would result in less entanglements.
- There was also discussion about methods to voluntarily reduce gear through a buyback or permit stacking program. These are longer term options being considered and it was agreed that a subcommittee should look into these approaches, along with longlining.
- There was also a discussion of implementing a depth restriction. The (Section 6 grant) whale distribution study is not complete. ODFW plans to analyze logbook data to get a better idea of the gear footprint outside of certain depths at certain times of the year to see what the impact of a depth restriction would be. A depth restriction could be combined with some reduction in gear or with a requirement to require gear modification (e.g., longlining) outside of that depth at certain times. The impacts of this approach to other fisheries would have to be considered.
- ODFW would like to enlist industry leadership to help consider longer term measures (e.g., derelict gear program, gear innovation, fisher education program). There was a discussion of possible working groups to address each of these topics, including developing ideas, seeking funding, identifying opportunities for collaboration, etc.
- Another ODCAC call will be scheduled for about a month from now, but the agency wants everyone to feel free to call at any time as another avenue for input.