



Commercial Crab Fishing Fleet Advisory

May 2, 2023

Marine Resources Program
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
2040 SE Marine Science Drive
Newport, OR 97365
www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP

Fleet Advisory for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in all waters off Oregon

ODFW is anticipating above average crabbing effort in Oregon waters for the month of May, based on the high volume of late-season tag purchases. Surveys over the last two weeks in Oregon waters (April 13 through April 25) observed scattered humpbacks and other large whales in waters deeper than 270 fathoms (~500 m), primarily in the southern region from Newport to the Oregon-California border. However, one aggregation of about 30-50 humpback whales was observed within 40 fathoms, just outside the Columbia River mouth. Because the ocean is dynamic and whales can move rapidly, the locations of these whales is likely to change over time. These observations only provide information within a small survey area and time span. Be aware that whale aggregations may exist in un-surveyed areas and may shift over short periods of time.

Due to the anticipated high number of crab lines in the water and these observations of whales, ODFW is issuing this **Fleet Advisory for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in all waters off Oregon**. Crab fishing vessels should remain vigilant and move or avoid setting gear in areas where *humpback whales* are transiting or foraging to further minimize risk of entanglement, effective immediately. This advisory will remain in effect through **May 31, 2023**.

We want to remind the fleet of the [crab fishing best practices](#) to help reduce risk of entanglements at all times, but especially when higher numbers of ESA-listed *humpback whales* are present off Oregon. Please remember to:

- Remove any fishing gear that you are not actively tending and promptly remove all gear from the ocean when finished crabbing for the season
- Use the minimum amount of scope required to compensate for tides, currents, and weather
- Adjust the length of pot lines when moving pots to shallower water to maintain taut vertical lines
- Minimize surface gear and ensure no excess line is floating at the surface
- Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of large feeding aggregations of whales
- Maintain gear to ensure lines and buoys are in good working condition and clearly marked
- Bring derelict gear to shore in-season
- Participate in derelict gear recovery by getting a permit to recover gear or reporting locations of derelict gear for permitted vessels to target for removal

Please share this advisory and reminders about crab fishing best practices to reduce risk of marine life entanglements with your networks. Also, consider reporting whale sightings using the WhaleAlert app and sharing the locations of unusually high whale or sea turtle activity with ODFW and with other fishermen. Any entangled marine mammals or sea turtles should be promptly reported at 1-877-SOS-WHALE (1-877-767-9425).

Thank you for taking these important, proactive steps to avoid entanglements and help to provide continued opportunities to harvest crab.

Contacts: Kelly Corbett 541-270-5083 or Kelly.C.Corbett@odfw.oregon.gov
Troy Buell 541-961-8135 or Troy.V.Buell@odfw.oregon.gov