

## Marine Resources Program

November 19, 2013



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### 2012-13 Crab Season Summary

The 2012-13 Oregon Commercial Dungeness crab season started coastwide on December 31st after two 15-day delays due to poor meat recovery (i.e., meat to shell ratio) in some areas. Despite the delayed opening of the season, Dungeness crab landings into Oregon ports from the ocean and Columbia River totaled 18.2 million pounds from 318 different permit holders and 6,468 separate landings. Total pounds landed surpassed the 2011-12 season total of 14.3 million pounds, but is below the 2010-11 season total of 21.3 million pounds (figure 1). In comparison, also shown in figure 1, the 10-year average for total annual landings is 20.3 million pounds.

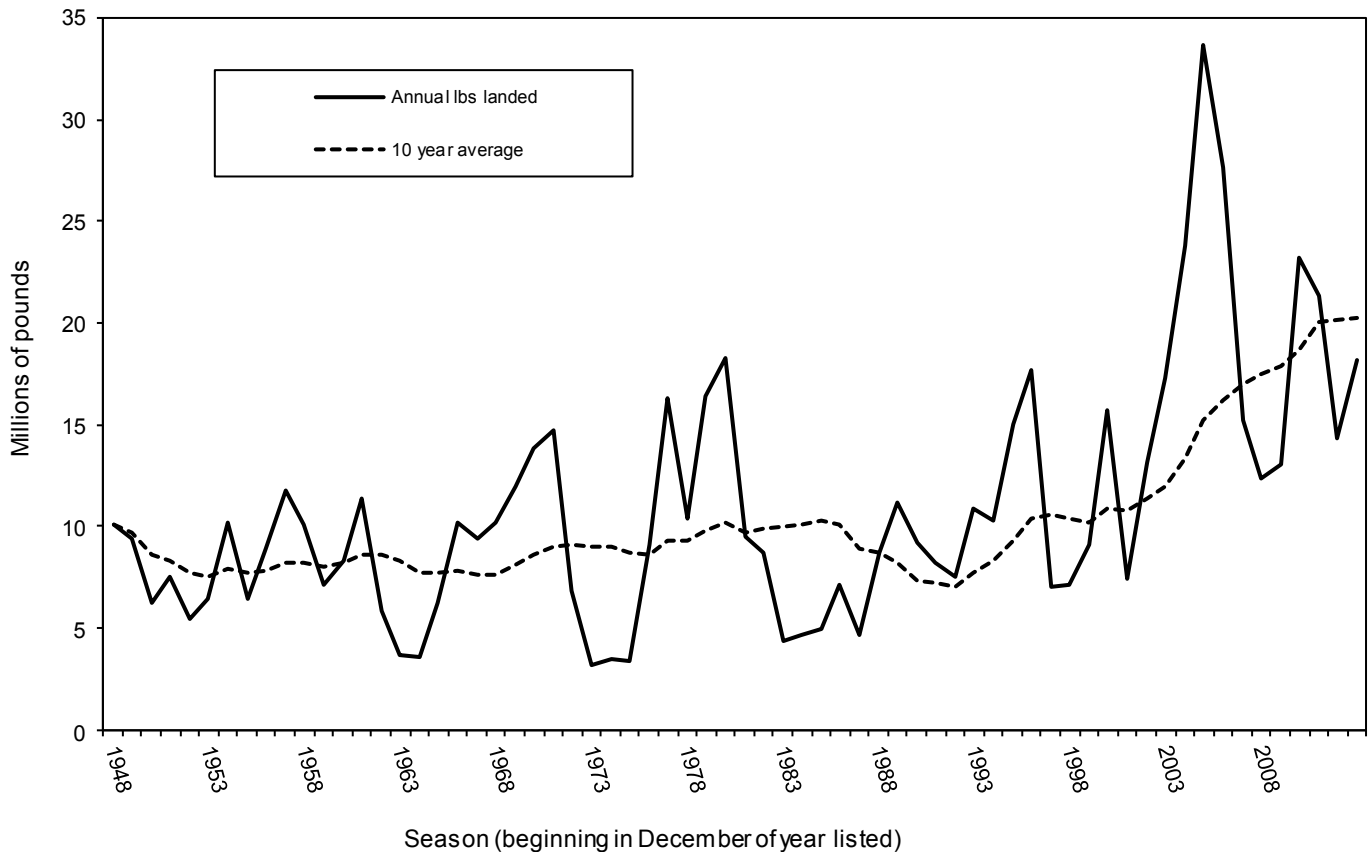


Figure 1. Landings (millions of lbs) per Dungeness crab season compared to the 10 year average.

The Brookings area led all ports in total pounds landed for the first time in the past ten years, with more than 5 million pounds, followed closely by the Newport, Astoria and Charleston areas with 4.2, 3.7 and 3.1 million pounds landed respectively (figure 2). Ex-vessel value this season totaled \$48.9 million dollars, the third highest valued crab year on the books for Oregon. Although down from last year's record average price per pound of \$2.96, an average of \$2.69 per pound for the 2012-13 season makes it the second highest average price in the history of the fishery (table 1). Pots used in the fishery this season totaled an estimated 113,300 pots, which is relatively close to the average 112,500 pots utilized each season in the fishery since pot limits were implemented (figure 3).

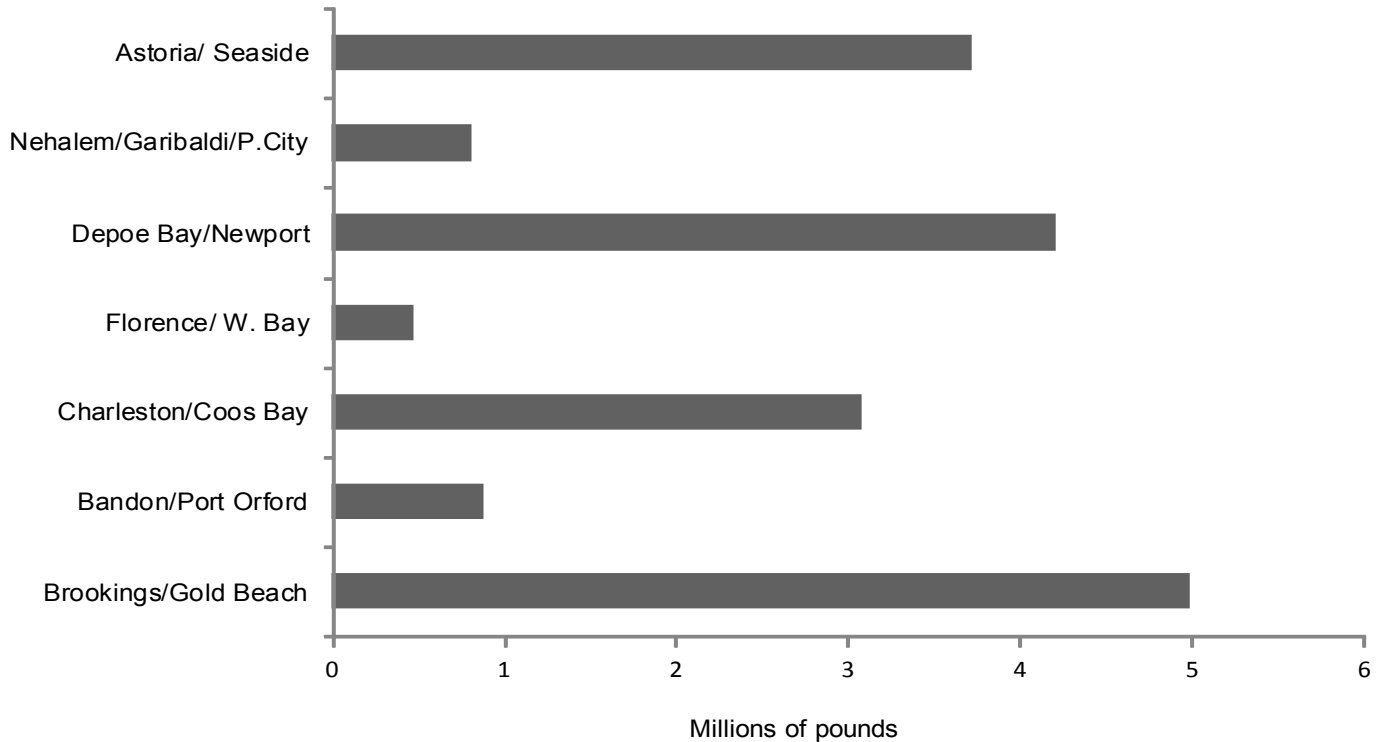


Figure 2. Landings in millions of pounds by port group for the 2012-13 commercial Dungeness crab season.

Month	Million lbs.	Ave. \$ / lb.
Dec	0.69	2.32
Jan	12.43	2.52
Feb	2.52	2.78
Mar	1.53	3.12
Apr	0.48	3.66
May	0.29	4.66
Jun	0.13	3.71
Jul	0.08	3.27
Aug	0.04	3.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.20</b>	<b>2.69</b>

Table 1. Landings in millions of pounds and average price by month for the 2012-13 Commercial Dungeness crab season.

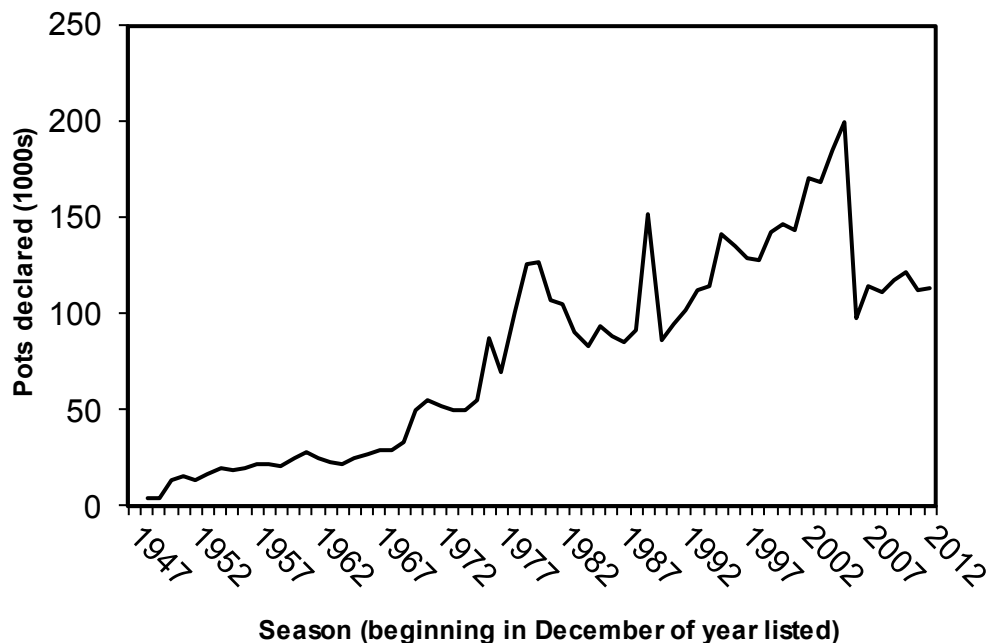
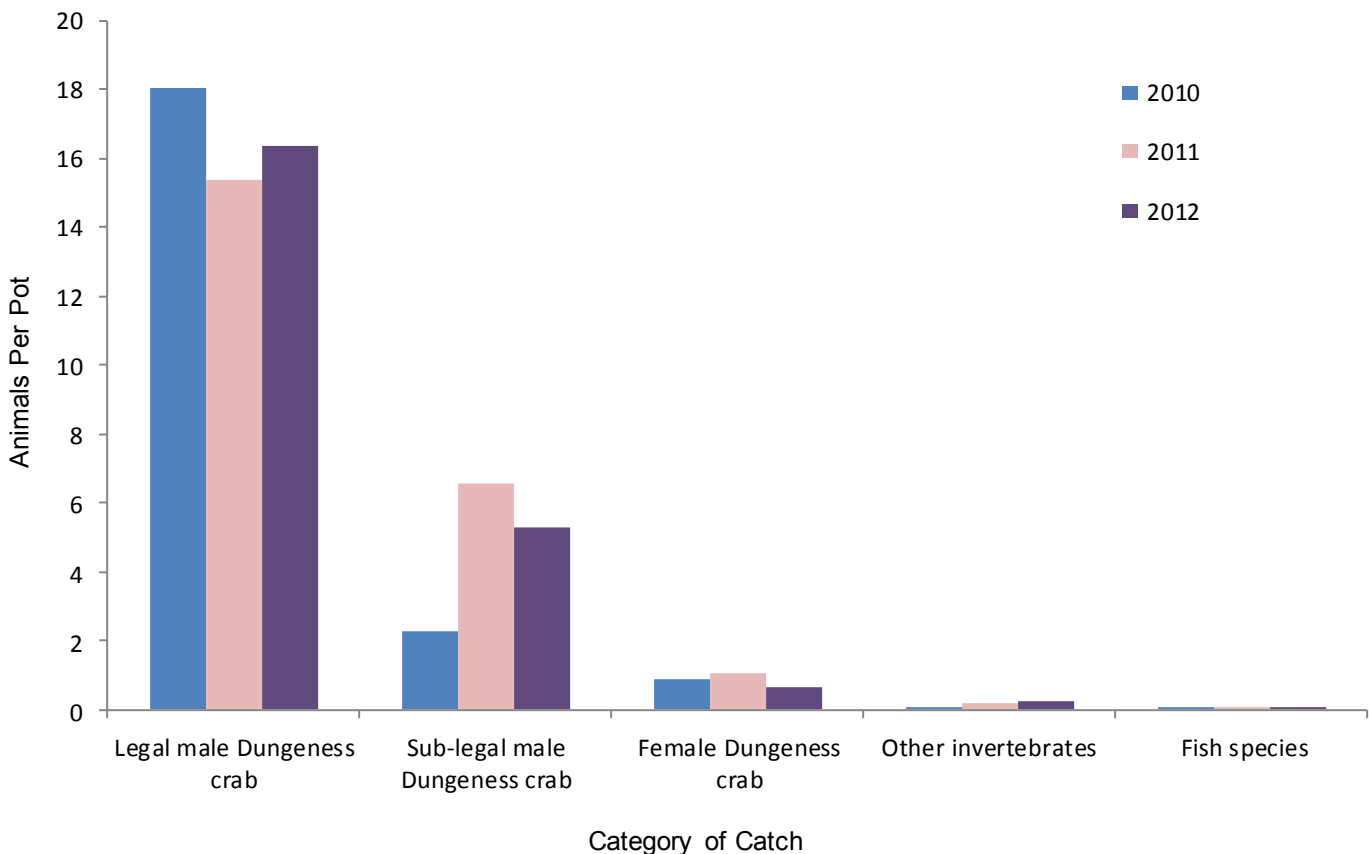


Figure 3. Pots declared by year in the Oregon Dungeness crab fishery. Boats' pot limits were used beginning in the 2006-07 crab season.

## Pre-season Testing

**Changes to the Tri-State Preseason Testing Protocol** – Several decisions were made at the 2013 Tri-State meeting this past May that will affect the process for opening this upcoming crab season. All three states agreed to end the practices of projecting meat recovery rates coastwide and rounding meat recovery results for the area north of Cascade Head. Also, it was agreed to revise the preseason testing schedule so that crabbers are notified of a season opening at least five days in advance of the gear setting period whenever possible. A summary of the Tri-state meeting and the revised preseason testing protocol can be found on PSFMC’s website at <http://www.psmfc.org/crab/>. The revised protocol was adopted into rule by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in early October.

**Additional Sampling** - During the last three years of preseason testing we have been conducting some additional sampling to help us learn more about the fishery and Dungeness crab. Starting in 2010 we began sampling a subset of the pots fished in each test string to document the quantity and species composition of all species caught in the pots, including female and sub-legal male Dungeness crab. Even though bycatch rates in the fishery are thought to be low, they are not well documented. Documentation of bycatch rates is a key component of all sustainable fisheries, and as such is a condition of the Oregon Dungeness crab fishery’s Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. In the first three years of this sampling we have sampled 561 pots and measured over 12,249 crab. Results of this sampling continue to indicate catch per unit effort (CPUE) of sub-legal male Dungeness crab is the highest of all the categories of bycatch, followed by female Dungeness crab, other invertebrates (sea stars, etc.) and fish species (Figure 4). We presented an overview of this additional preseason sampling at the second annual MSC fishery audit to assist meeting conditions placed on the fishery to maintain its certification.



**Figure 4.** Coastwide catch per pot of categories of bycatch caught during preseason tests trips off Oregon.

**2013 Results** – In partnership with the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission (ODCC), the first round of Oregon preseason Dungeness crab quality testing was conducted coastwide during November 4-10 (results to the right). The minimum meat recovery rates to be met in each test area are: 23% north of Cascade Head (no rounding allowed) and 25% south of Cascade Head (rounded to the nearest integer). Once the season opening structure for this crab season is mutually decided by all three states that information will be disseminated as soon as possible.

Area	Date Completed	Meat Recovery %	Met Criteria
Astoria	11/5/13	21.4	No
Garibaldi	11/10/13	25.4	Yes
Newport	11/6/13	24.4	No
Coos Bay	11/6/13	28.2	Yes
Floras Creek	11/6/13	27.2	Yes
Port Orford	11/6/13	24.9	Yes
Brookings	11/6/13	23.9	No

*Table 2. Round one meat recovery percentages from each Oregon preseason test area.*

Crab were also collected during this round of testing for toxin testing by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Results of all of these tests will be reported as soon as they are available and posted on our website at [http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/news\\_publications.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/news_publications.asp).

We would like to thank all of those involved with the testing; the staff at Hallmark Fisheries in Newport, Charleston, Brookings, and Port Orford, staff at Bornstein Seafoods in Astoria and Newport, the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission and the captains and crew of the crabbing vessels that make this possible.

## Commercial Crab Sampling Program Overview

During the 2012-13 crab season we had three samplers coastwide sampling your Dungeness crab catch at the docks and going out on ride-along trips to help us monitor the fishery and meet ongoing conditions of the MSC sustainability certification. We would like to thank the fleet for the cooperation and participation with both components of this reinvigorated sampling program. The sampling at the dock consisted of obtaining carapace widths and total sample weights from a certain number of crab (based on size of the offload). We sampled over 300 offloads, from 166 different vessels from January through April. The at-sea sampling consisted of documenting bycatch of female crabs, under-size crabs and other species caught during normal Dungeness crab fishing operations. We were able to get out on seven trips out of six different ports including Astoria, Garibaldi, Newport, Charleston, Port Orford and Brookings. This was a great new start for collecting fishery information on Oregon's favorite crab fishery!

In the upcoming 2013-14 crab season we will be continuing these dockside and at-sea monitoring efforts. If you are willing to participate in the at-sea portion of the program please contact us soon so we can start lining up trips. Also, we plan on reporting preliminary results of both components at the fishery's third annual MSC audit this coming February, and having a more detailed report of this sampling program and its results out by summer 2014, so stay tuned.

If you have any questions, comments, concerns or suggestions for improvements as this program continues please give us a call anytime as we are very interested in continuing to make this program as efficient and useful for the fishery as we can.

## Talking Crab Management

**Derelict Gear Permit Program** - During this past legislative session the Oregon legislature passed House Bill 3262 which allows the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to authorize a permitted derelict gear recovery program. The bill exempts derelict crab pots left out in the ocean after the end of the season from Oregon's personal property law, which ultimately allows the permitted gear retrievers to decide what to do with the retrieved pots. Although we envision structuring this program similar to the one that has been in place in Washington for a number of years, the details and,

sideboards of the program for Oregon still need to be developed. This upcoming spring we plan on working with the Oregon Dungeness Crab Advisory Committee, the ODCC and anyone else in the industry who is interested, to help us develop a program that is successful in cleaning up crab gear left out in the ocean after the season while addressing the needs and concerns of the industry. We hope to have a gear retrieval program ready to roll-out by September 2014.

**Marine Stewardship Certification Fishery Limited Reference Point** - At the Crab Summits this past spring we obtained input from industry members on a preferred response from management should the Dungeness crab stock fall to a very low level (called a Limit Reference Point; LRP) at some point in the future. Defining a LRP and a management response if breached are requirements of continued MSC certification of the Oregon Dungeness crab fishery, an industry sponsored initiative. Throughout the discussions we heard a lot of support for an adaptive management response. In other words, rather than identifying one single management response to an LRP breach, a suite of management responses could be identified, but implementation of any particular response would be dependent on the cause (if identifiable) of the population decline. At the third annual MSC surveillance of the fishery (February 2014) we will present additional data to help define a LRP for the fishery. We then plan to continue the conversation with industry through this next year to help us define appropriate and effective adaptive management responses if in the future the LRP is breached.

**Website Updates** - We have recently added many new links to our commercial Dungeness crab fishery webpages for you to easily access information about the management of your fishery. Latest additions include 2013 crab summit summaries, past fishery newsletters, notices to permit holders, preseason and toxin testing results and news releases. You can check them out at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/index.asp>. We plan on continuing to update these links with current information but please let us know if there is additional information that you would like to see accessible via our web pages.

## Other News.....

**Marine Reserves Information-** Cascade Head and Cape Perpetua marine reserves and marine protected area harvest restrictions **are effective January 1, 2014.**

### **There are many ways to get the information**

Maps and coordinates of the boundaries are in the 2014 synopsis of Oregon Commercial Fishing Regulations booklet available at any ODFW office. Additionally, ODFW will have thumb drives available so you can download the boundary coordinates into your boat plotters. The Oregon State Police and ODFW will distribute the thumb drives during this season's hold inspections in all ports. Also, the thumb drives will be available at ODFW offices, or by contacting Stacy Galleher at 541-867-7701 ext.224 (Stacy.n.galleher@state.or.us). Included with the thumb drive will be instructions on how to install the boundaries on your plotter as well as additional information on the regulations for each area.

### **Summary of Rules for Marine Reserves** (OAR Division 635-012):

In all marine reserves, take of any fish, invertebrates, seaweeds or wildlife is prohibited. Also, fishing gear shall not be deployed in the water at any time within the marine reserve. However, boats are allowed to transit and anchor in the reserve with catch on board.

### **Retrieval of lost gear:**

You may remove fishing gear (crab pots) that have drifted into the area but must call Oregon State Police (1-800-452-7888) to receive permission before removing gear.

### **Questions?**

Contact the ODFW Newport office: 541-867-4741 or visit the marine reserves website: <http://OregonOcean.info/MarineReserves>.

**Structure In The Water** – Please be advised of two permitted wave energy sites with anchors overwintering in waters off Oregon. The anchors at both sites are marked with surface buoys and the coordinates of each are as follows: Yaquina Head - 44°41.779 124° 07.702, 44°41.771 124° 07.602, 44°41.787 124° 07.569 and Reedsport - 43°45.538' 124°14.357 (offset 100 meters). For more information please contact Delia Kelly, ODFW Ocean Energy Coordinator, 541.867.4741 ext. 292 or Delia.R.Kelly@state.or.us.



**Year 2 of Dungeness Crab Tagging Study: Get Cash for Tags** - October marks the beginning of the second year for the Oregon C.R.A.B. [Collaborative Research to Assess Bycatch] Project tagging study. If you see a tagged crab, pull the tag out and return it for a \$20 reward and a chance to win cash prizes in two raffles. The majority of the tags will be on females and short males, so look for the green tag before the crab is thrown back. This study is being done in collaboration with Oregon fishermen to determine mortality rates of discarded crab

as part of the effort to maintain MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) certification.

The first cash prize raffle was held on October 29th. Congratulations to the winners! The raffle will be held in April 2014, at the end of the study.

**If you catch a tagged crab, please:**

**Return the tag with the following information:**

- √ Date the crab was caught
- √ Fishing gear that was used to catch the crab
- √ Location where the crab was caught (Lat/ Lon preferred; description accepted)
- √ Name, address, phone number, and signature

**To (by mail or in person Monday - Thursday:**

**8 - 12 and 1 – 5 or Friday: 8 - 12):**

Oregon C.R.A.B. Project  
OSU Extension Service  
29 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Newport, OR 97365



**For more information:**

Visit [www.oregoncrabproject.org](http://www.oregoncrabproject.org)

Email [crab@oregonstate.edu](mailto:crab@oregonstate.edu)

Call (541) 961-6166

Thank you for your help with this research project!

## Buoy Tag Recycling

Lastly, as you are gearing up for this next season please remember that we will recycle your old buoy tags. Unfortunately they still cannot be recycled through your local curbside recycling programs. You can bring your buoy tags in to any ODFW office in the major coastal ports and we will transport them in bulk to the recycling center.



**Buoy tag colors for the 2013-14 season:**

Tier 200 – pink  
Tier 300 – yellow  
Tier 500 – tan  
Replacements – black

**Replacement buoy tags issued each year:**

2006-07 - 3647  
2007-08 - 4273  
2008-09 - 3005  
2009-10 - 3907  
2010-11 - 4371  
2011-12 - 2802  
2012-13 - 2702

## Have a Safe and Productive 2013-14 Crab Season!

We are always interested in hearing from you about your fishery and the issues that are important to you. Please give us a call or stop by our office in Newport anytime.

*Kelly Corbett* Commercial Crab Project Leader (541) 867-0300 x 244

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*Troy Buell* State Fishery Management Program Leader (541) 867-0300 x 225

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