

Marine Resources Program

November 2014



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2013-14 Crab Season Summary

The 2013-14 Oregon commercial Dungeness crab season started coastwide on December 16th after one 15-day delay due to poor meat recovery (i.e., meat to shell ratio) in some areas. Dungeness crab landings into Oregon ports from the ocean and Columbia River totaled 14.4 million pounds from 314 different permit holders and 6,179 separate landings. Total pounds landed were below the 2012-13 season total of 18.2 million pounds, but very close to the 2011-12 season total of 14.3 million pounds (figure 1). In comparison, also shown in figure 1, the 10-year average for total annual landings is 19.3 million pounds. The Newport area led all ports in total pounds landed with more than 5.2 million pounds, followed by the Astoria, Charleston and Brookings areas with 3.5, 2.9 and 0.9 million

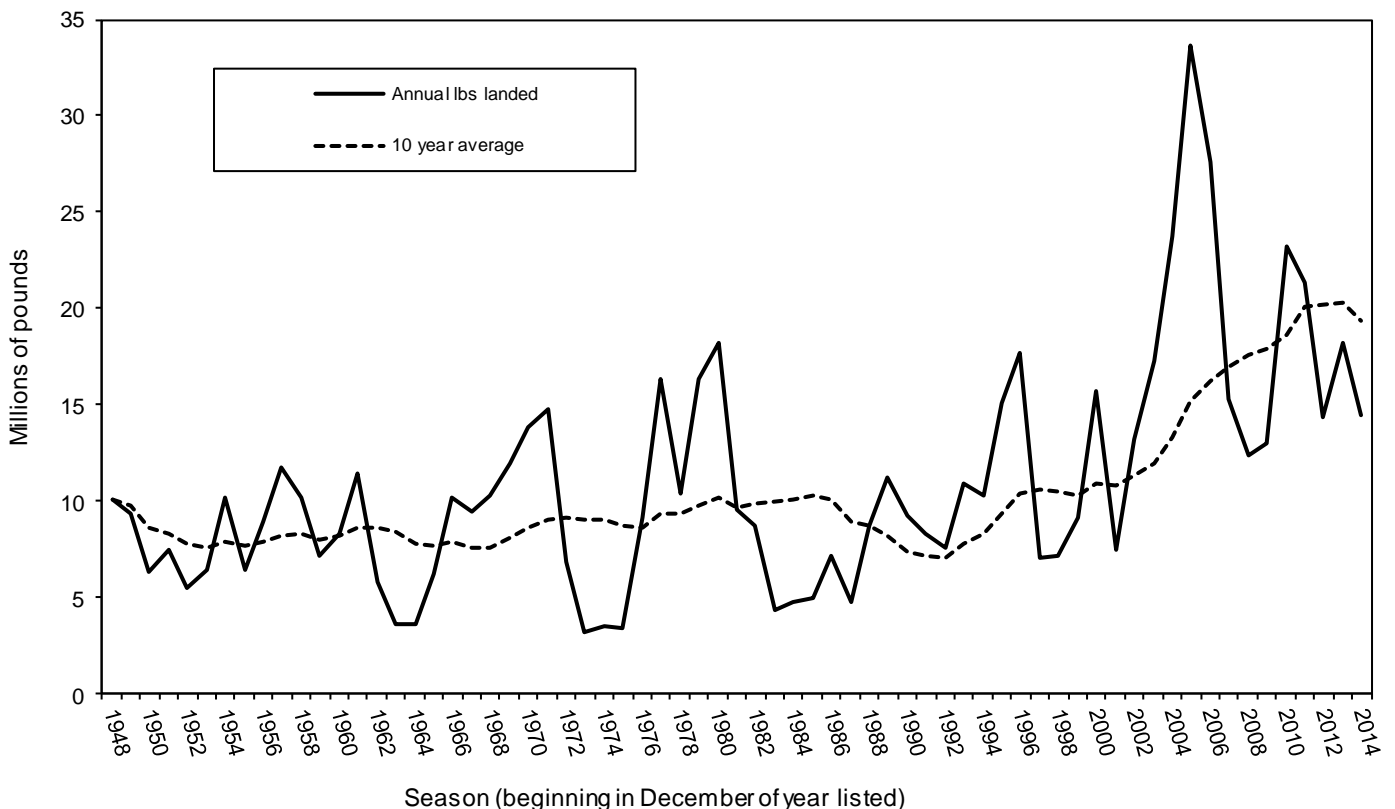


Figure 1. Landings (millions of lbs) per Oregon commercial Dungeness crab season compared to the 10 year average.

pounds landed respectively (figure 2). Ex-vessel value this season totaled \$49.9 million dollars, the highest valued crab year on the books for Oregon. The average price per pound was \$3.46 (table 1), another record high for Oregon's fishery, coming in at \$0.50 higher than any other season. Pots used in the fishery this season totaled an estimated 113,300 pots, which is close to the average 112,500 pots utilized each season since pot limits were implemented (figure 3).

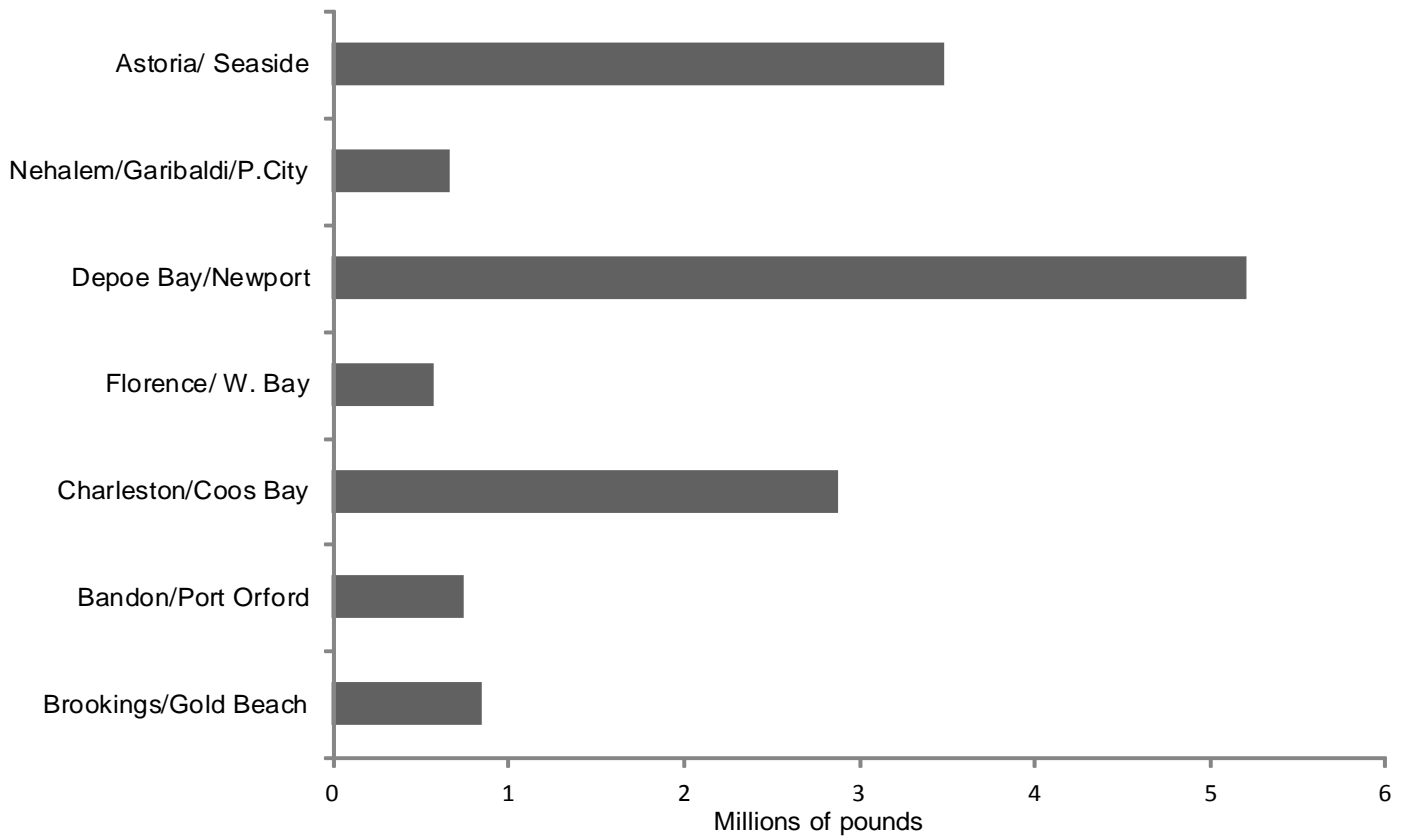


Figure 2. Landings in millions of pounds by port group for the 2013-14 Oregon commercial Dungeness crab season.

Month	Million lbs.	Ave. \$ / lb.
Dec	8.52	2.79
Jan	3.73	3.69
Feb	0.96	5.48
Mar	0.49	6.18
Apr	0.26	6.36
May	0.21	6.68
Jun	0.09	4.49
Jul	0.11	3.99
Aug	0.05	3.96
Total	14.4	3.46

Table 1. Landings in millions of pounds and average price by month for the 2013-14 Oregon commercial Dungeness crab season.

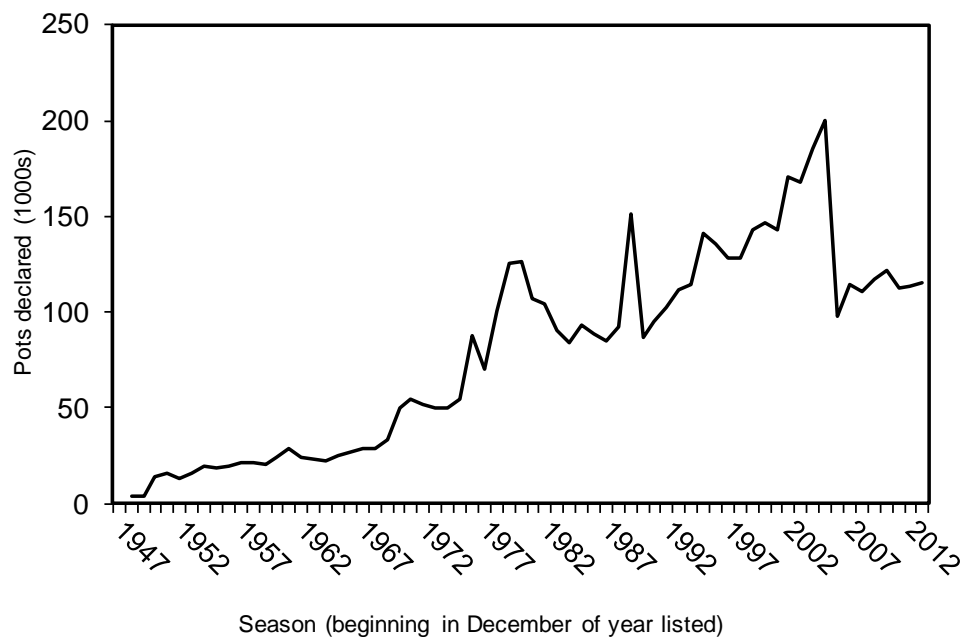


Figure 3. Pots declared by year in the Oregon commercial Dungeness crab fishery. Boats' pot limits were used beginning in the 2006-07 crab season.

Gear Pulling Start Time Change At the Tri-State meeting this past May, Oregon and Washington agreed to change the gear retrieval start time from 12 AM to 9 AM so that gear pulling begins in daylight hours. To accomplish this, it was agreed to lengthen the presoak period from 64 hours to 73 hours. **This means that at the beginning of this crab season (2014-15) you will have a 73 hour presoak and pulling of gear will start at 9AM.** California was not in support of changing their gear retrieval start time and will remain with a 12 AM gear retrieval start time.

Preseason Testing 2014

Protocol changes – A few changes to the Tri-State Pre-Season Testing Protocol (Protocol) were also agreed upon at the Tri-State meeting this year. The changes to the protocol provide clarification of testing schedules and procedures to help further ensure an organized opening to the commercial crab season on good quality crab. 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 August.

In partnership with the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission (ODCC), the first round of Oregon preseason Dungeness crab quality is targeted for completion by November 15th and no later than November 22nd. Crab will also be collected during the first 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. If you are interested in volunteering to conduct testing in your port this year give us or the ODCC a call as soon as possible.

Additional Sampling - During the last four 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. Documentation of bycatch rates is a key component of all sustainable fisheries. Through this sampling we have sampled 668 pots and measured 13,883 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) at this time of year.

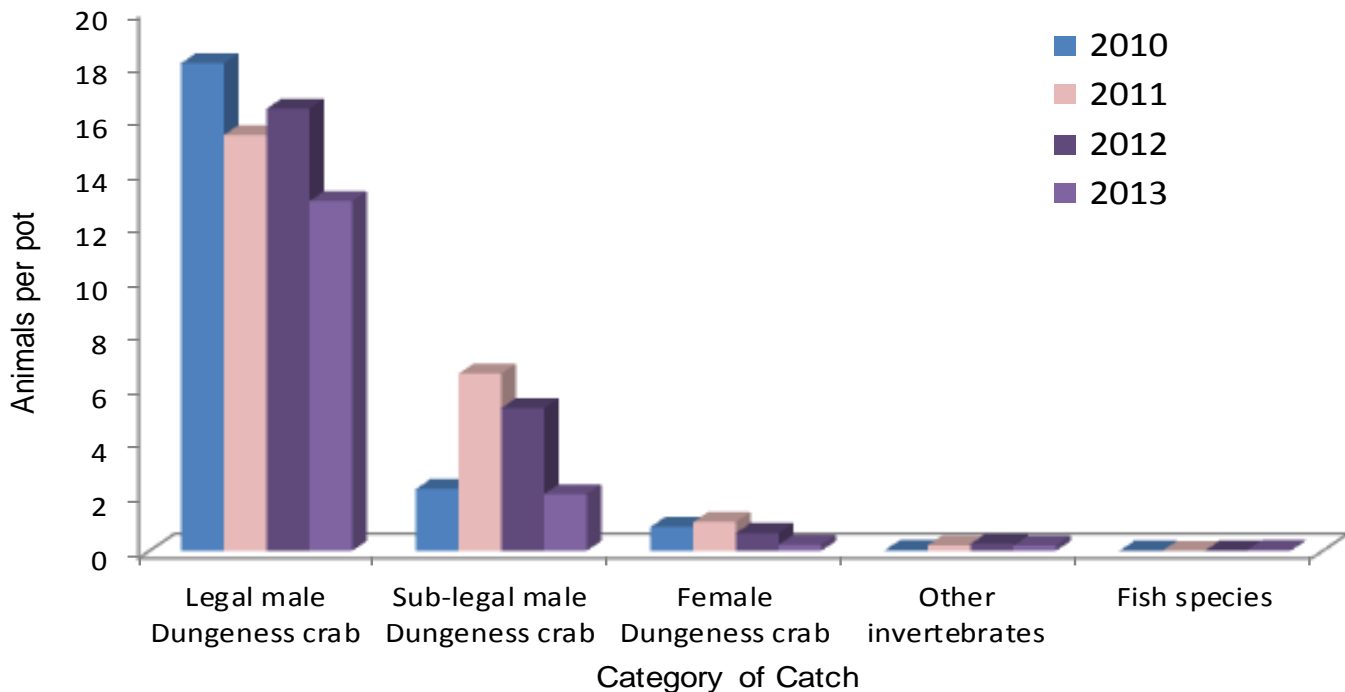


Figure 4. Coastwide catch per pot of categories of bycatch caught during preseason tests trips off Oregon.

Commercial Crab Fishery Monitoring

Dockside and At-sea sampling - During the 2013-14 crab season we had regular sampling coverage on the south coast and intermittent sampling coverage on the north coast for sampling your Dungeness crab catch at the docks and going out on ride-along trips. 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 were able to sample 132 offloads, from 84 different vessels from December through April. The at-sea sampling consisted of documenting bycatch of female crabs, undersize crabs and other species caught during normal Dungeness crab fishing operations. We were able to get out on four trips out of three different ports including Charleston, Port Orford and Brookings. We would like to continue to thank you for your cooperation and participation with both components of this fishery sampling program. Information from these sampling efforts helps us monitor the fishery and meet ongoing conditions of the MSC sustainability certification. We plan to get more detailed information out to you on our findings as soon as it is available. In the upcoming 2014-15 crab season we will be continuing these dockside and at-sea monitoring efforts in some capacity coastwide. 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.

Fishery Limited Reference Point - Defining a Limit Reference Point (LRP) harvest policy and a management response are requirements of continued MSC certification for the fishery, an industry sponsored initiative, and in line with the resource management goals for the Department. An LRP defines where you don't want a fishery to be – a severe population decline leading to a collapsed fishery with low landings and low economic value. The management response is what ODFW would do to try to help the fishery resource recover. Throughout discussions with industry about an LRP for the fishery we heard a lot of support for an adaptive management response, rather than identifying one single response to an LRP breach. Because of this feedback we identified a suite of management responses, but implementation of any particular response will be dependent on the cause (if identifiable) of the population decline. In August, we presented the LRP and a suite of potential management responses to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC). This means we will now be annually evaluating three metrics of the fishery (two based on landings, one on logbooks), and if the fishery falls below prescribed levels for all three metrics in a given year, we will then ask the OFWC to adopt one or more of an identified suite of management changes until the stock recovers. The new LRP harvest management policy is now incorporated into our Research and Monitoring Plan (RMP) for Dungeness crab. The revised RMP is available on our website at http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/news_publications.asp.

Permitted Post-Season Derelict Gear Recovery Program

In order to further incentivize removal of lost and abandoned crab gear from the ocean, the ODCC supported House Bill 3262 (enrolled during the 2013 regular session), which gave the OFWC the authority to issue permits to commercially licensed vessels to retrieve derelict commercial crab pots fifteen days after the end of the season. The bill exempts crab pots recovered in the program from Oregon's personal property law,

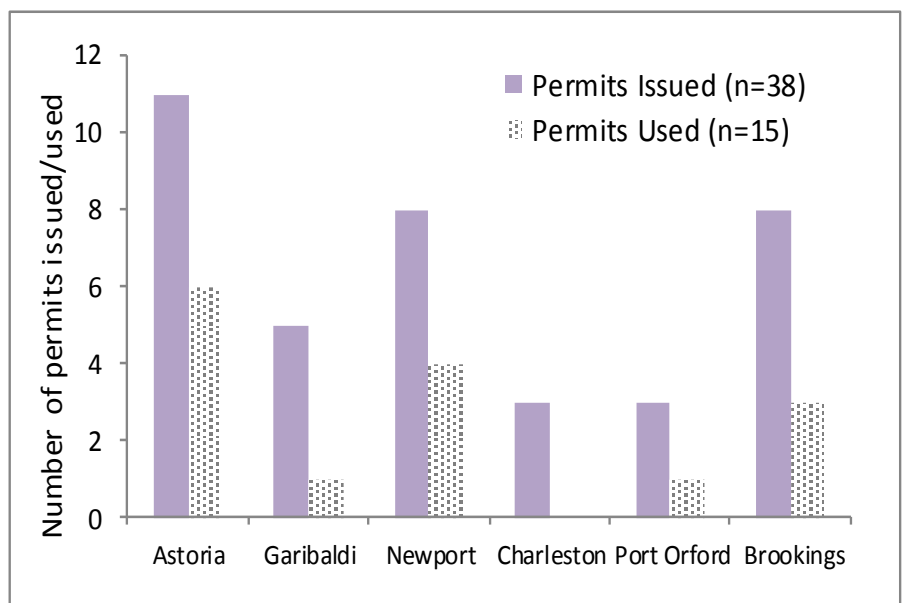


Figure 5. The number of permits issued and utilized by port in the 2014 permitted derelict gear recovery program.

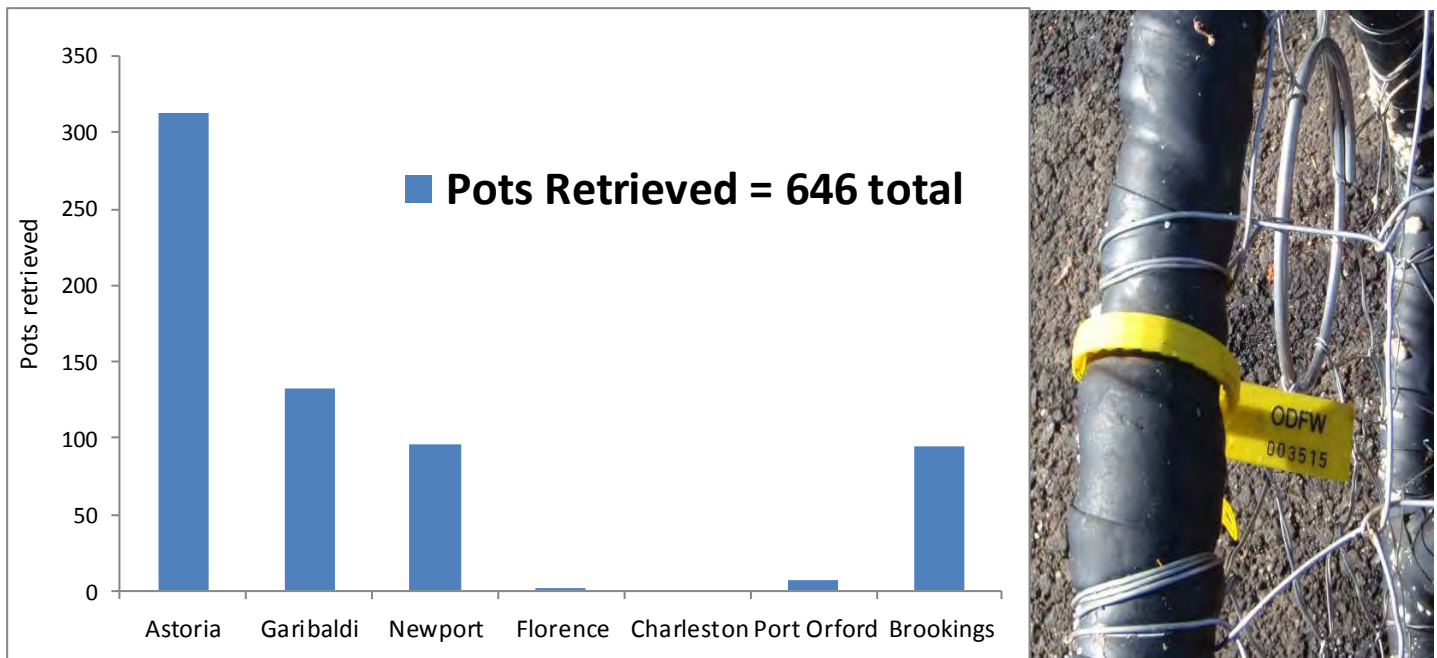


Figure 6. The number of pots retrieved by port during the 2014 permitted derelict gear recovery program (left). The derelict pot tag attached during the gear registration process by ODFW or OSP to every commercial pot brought in through the permitted program (right). <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/>

which ultimately allows the permitted gear retrievers to decide what to do with the retrieved gear (i.e. keep, sell, etc.). In August the OFWC adopted rules to allow us to issue Post-Season Derelict Gear Recovery Permits. Throughout the duration of the four-week program this year (Sept.4-Oct.2) we issued 38 permits coastwide, of which, 15 permits recovered gear (Figure 5). For enforcement and tracking purposes, requirements of the permits issued included pre and post recovery trip notifications, logbooks, and registration and tagging (Figure 6 right) of recovered gear by state officials. A total of 646 commercial crab pots were recovered and brought into six Oregon ports (Figure 6 left). Pots retrieved were from 149 different vessels and the majority were from this past crab season (n=549). All gear was registered and tagged by ODFW or OSP staff at the dock. Gear registration forms are posted on our website (<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/>) to allow any previous gear owners interested in negotiating for retrieved pots to contact retrieving vessels themselves. We would like to thank everyone who participated in the first year of the program and we look forward to evaluating the program for the future.



Figure 7. Pots retrieved during the 2014 permitted derelict gear recovery program and registered by state officials in Newport (left) and Garibaldi (above).

Legislative Implementation During the 2014 regular session the legislature passed House Bill 4049 and the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted rules to be consistent with the new statutory language. The bill made the following changes to statutes regulating ocean Dungeness crab permits:

- 1) Removes the authority to revoke or suspend a limited entry Dungeness crab permit from the courts and the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. It authorizes the Commercial Fishery Permit Board to revoke limited entry Dungeness crab permits.
- 2) Allows for Dungeness crab permits that were transferred to a vessel shorter than ten feet than the vessel that held the permit on January 1, 2013 to be transferred back to a vessel that is equal to or smaller than the vessel that held the permit January 1, 2013.

Other News.....

Fishery Text and Email Updates - This past spring we set up an ODFW saltwater bulletin for the ocean commercial Dungeness crab fishery. If you would like to receive email and/or text messages with up-to-date information about the fishery please visit <http://dfw.state.or.us/MRP/> to subscribe. You can change your subscription profile or cancel your subscription at any time by logging in on the same webpage listed above.

AMSEA/USCG Drill Conductor Courses - Get your entire crew trained or retrained now! Participants will learn emergency procedures and the use of safety equipment aboard commercial fishing vessels. The class will be physically demanding, including timed immersion suit donning, entering the water, then into a life raft, starting pumps, putting out fires, etc. Classes are being held in Gribaldi (11/4-11/5), Astoria (11/6-7) and Coos Bay (11/13-11/14). For more information contact Mike or Curt at 503-240-9337 or Steve Kee in North Bend at 541-756-9224.



Crab Tagging Study Results and Information

Visit www.oregoncrabproject.org
Email Noelle.yochum@oregonstate.edu



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 2014-15 season:

Tier 200 – BLUE
Tier 300 – GREEN
Tier 500 – BROWN
Replacements – GRAY

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
2013-14 - 2750

Have a Safe and Productive 2014-15 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.

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