



Industry Notice

Commercial Crab

January 23, 2026

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is sending you this notice to inform you of **temporary rule changes to move the implementation of the existing late-season whale entanglement risk reduction measures from May 1 to April 1 effective this current crab season (2025-26)**. The regulation changes include:

- Reduced pot limits by 20% combined with a 40-fathom depth restriction, effective **April 1**. This means beginning **April 1**, the amount of Dungeness crab gear allocated to each Dungeness crab permit is reduced by 20% and no gear will be allowed outside 40-fathoms.
- Required late-season buoy tag **in addition to** primary season tag. This means beginning **April 1** all Dungeness crab gear in the water must have a secondary tag attached to it in addition to the primary tag. Late-season tags are available for purchase from the Department at cost (\$1.15 per tag) but cannot be attached to gear in the water before **March 1**. An application for late-season tags is included with this notice.
- All commercial landings of crab beginning **April 1** are prohibited unless late-season tags are purchased and attached.
- Any gear in the ocean without a late-season buoy tag or outside of 40 fathoms can be retrieved under in-season derelict gear provisions beginning **April 21**.

These rule changes are being implemented in response to record numbers of humpback whale entanglements attributed by NMFS to Oregon Dungeness crab fishing gear in both 2024 and 2025. Fleet advisories issued in [January](#) and [December](#) 2025 detail three incidents in 2024 and four in 2025, including an entangled juvenile humpback whale that stranded alive near Yachats. In each case, NMFS attributed the entanglements to the Oregon Dungeness crab fishery using established confirmation criteria, including photo and video documentation of the entangling gear and, in some cases, recovery of the gear.

ODFW hosted an Oregon Entanglement Advisory Committee (OEAC) meeting on April 4, 2025, where we discussed entanglement concerns and the potential need to take regulatory action. The list of potential management measures discussed included additional depth or pot limit restrictions, closing the season early, adjusting time or amount of trip limits, opening as early as possible under the Tri-State protocol, additional derelict gear recovery provisions and area closures. This information was shared in a [May 2025 industry notice](#), and summary of the group's discussion is posted [here](#).

ODFW has significant concerns about the record high rate of entanglements in the last two years. Late-season pot limit reductions and depth restrictions were initially implemented in May of each year to decrease the co-occurrence of crab gear and whales in Oregon based on

the estimated timing of the humpback whale feeding migration. Since implementation, more recent research has found that exposure to entanglement risk peaks around the month of April. We are taking these actions to reduce risk of whale entanglement in crab gear earlier in the season and move up the initiation of late-season derelict gear recovery efforts.

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

- Remove any fishing gear 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 buoy 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. If unable to retrieve, please report the location of derelict gear to ODFW.

Please share this information 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 fishers. **All entangled marine mammals or sea turtles should be promptly reported by calling 1-877-SOS-WHALE (1-877-767-9425).** **Keep a safe distance and do not attempt disentanglement.**

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

Contacts:

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Oregon Commercial Limited Entry Dungeness Crab
Late-Season Buoy Tag Order Form



ODFW License Services
4034 Fairview Industrial Dr. SE
Salem, Oregon 97302
503-947-6101
Fax: 503-947-6117

*All fields must be completed

Vessel Doc. or
Or Marine Board# _____

Vessel Name: _____

Crab Permit # _____

Buoy Brand # _____

*** REQUIRED FIELDS**

Permit Holder Name *: _____

(If Business or Corporation Name, include papers for signature authority)

Address *: _____

City *: _____ State *: _____ Zip Code *: _____

Phone Number *: _____ Email: _____

Contact Phone Number if Lost Pot Tags are found *: _____

Tags will be sent to the above address, unless an alternate address is listed below, or you can pick up tags in-person at the Salem ODFW office. Tags will not be shipped to an alternate ODFW office. UPS will not deliver to P.O. Box; you must include a physical address for mailing.

Alternate UPS Shipping Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code, _____

Name one alternate person that may pick up replacement buoy tags if the Permit Owner is not available: _____

NOTE: No one other than the Permit holder or named alternate may pick up replacement tags.

Please specify the total amount of late-season tags you are requesting. No refunds on purchased tags. Buoy Tags are \$1.15 each.

500 pot limit permit can order up to 400

300 pot limit permit can order up to 240

200 pot limit permit can order up to 160

Total tags requested _____ x \$1.15/tag = \$ _____ Total Amount Due

Payment options: Check or Money Order (**Mail Order Only**)

Visa/Master Card/Discover (**Fax, mail or phone order**)

Card No. _____ - _____ - _____ - _____ Exp Date (MM/YY): _____, CVC _____

SIGNATURE OF CARD HOLDER: _____

X _____

****Signature of Permit Owner (Required) ****

Date