



2020-2021 Recreational Dungeness Crab Season

General Information:

Current regulations for the take of Dungeness crab in the recreational fishery are summarized in the table below. Recreational fishers are also required to have a measuring device to ensure all Dungeness crab meet the minimum size limit of **5¾ inches**, measured as the shortest distance through the body from edges of shell directly in front and excluding lateral spines (see photo, right).



Proper placement of crab gauge measuring Dungeness crab. Photo by J. Phillips, CDFW.

Summary of current regulations for the recreational take of Dungeness crab.

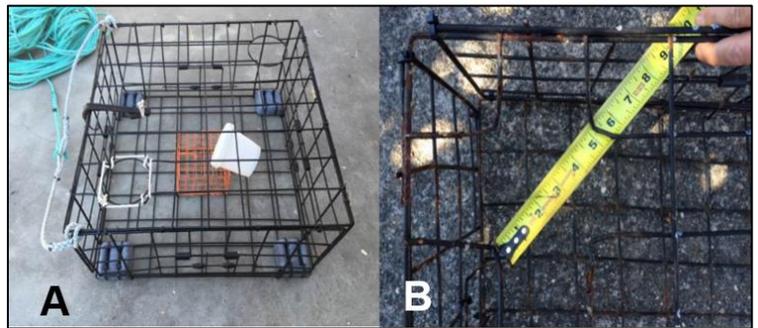
| Fishing Area | Open Season | Daily Bag/Possession Limit | Gear Type |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| Ocean waters in Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte counties | Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020 - Friday, July 30, 2021 | 10 | Taken by hand or by hoop net, crab trap, or crab loop traps with up to 6 loops |
| Ocean waters in all other counties (excludes San Francisco and San Pablo bays where no Dungeness crab can be taken) | Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020 – Wednesday, June 30, 2021 | 10 | Taken by hand or by hoop net, crab trap, or crab loop traps with up to 6 loops |
| Freshwater in Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte counties | Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020 - Friday, July 30, 2021 | 10 | Taken by hand or by hoop net |
| Freshwater in Sonoma County | Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020 – Wednesday, June 30, 2021 | 10 | Taken by hand or by hoop net |

Crab Traps:

- Crab traps must not be deployed or fished **seven days prior to the opening** of the Dungeness crab season (Oct. 30 – Nov. 6, 2020).
- Crab traps must possess a **buoy that is legibly marked with the operator of the trap's GO ID number** as stated on his or her sport fishing license (see photo, right). Crab traps used by a commercial passenger fishing vessel (CPFV) shall have the commercial boat registration number affixed to each trap and trap buoy.
- **Escape Openings:** Crab traps must be outfitted with two rigid circular escape openings that are a minimum of 4¼ inches in diameter and located so that the lowest portion is at the most 5 inches from the top of the trap (see photo, right).
- **Destruct Device:** Crab traps must contain at least one destruct device made from a single strand of untreated cotton twine size No. 120 or less. The destruct device must create an unobstructed opening anywhere in the top or upper half of the trap that is at least 5 inches in diameter when this material corrodes or fails (see photos, below and right).
- **Written permission** from the owner of the trap, including permission transmitted electronically (for example email or text), must be in your possession to operate the trap of another person.



Crab buoy shown with a GO ID number. Photo by T. Tanaka, CDFW.



A recreational box-style crab trap (A), with two required 4¼-inch escape rings placed on the top of the trap, one with a ring tied in place using No. 120 untreated cotton twine, which serves as the destruct device. When this material corrodes or fails, it will create a large enough opening (B). Photo by J. Langell and J. Hendricks, CDFW.



Round-style crab trap with plastic hook attached by the destruct device. The lid will open when the device corrodes or fails. Photo by J. Langell and J. Hendricks, CDFW.

- There is **no limit to the number of crab traps** that can be used by recreational fishers, except the limit is 60 when operating under the authority of a CPFV license.
- CDFW reminds recreational fishers to **use “Best Practices”** when deploying crab trap gear. To request a hardcopy of the latest 2020-2021 Best Practices Guide for Minimizing Marine Life Entanglement, please email: WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov
- On public piers, a person is limited to two appliances used to take crabs (for example two hoop nets, or one crab loop trap and one hoop net). See [section 28.65\(b\) of the online Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations](#).



A hoop net being used to take crab. Photo by J. Phillips, CDFW.

Hoop Nets:

- All hoop nets must be raised and inspected **every 2 hours**.
- Hoop nets used south of Point Arguello, Santa Barbara County, which are not deployed from shore or manmade structures (such as piers and jetties), are required to have a **marked buoy** (see specific [regulations](#)). When using hoop nets to take crab (or spiny lobster), a person cannot possess more than **5 hoop nets** with a total limit of **10 hoop nets per vessel**. These regulations are not applicable to hoop nets used north of Point Arguello where there is no marking requirement.

Proposed Regulatory Changes for 2021-2022 Season:

The Fish and Game Commission is considering several changes to the recreational crab fishing regulations to minimize the risk of marine life entanglement and gather essential fishery information. If these changes are adopted, they would not be in place until the 2021-2022 Dungeness crab season. To learn more, please visit the [Fish and Game Commission website](#). You can also [subscribe to electronic mailings](#) to receive updates related to the proposed changes to the recreational crab fishery.

The proposed regulation changes would include the following elements:

- Enhanced Gear Marking - would require fishers to mark their crab traps with a specific size buoy and marker buoy.
- Service Interval - would require a 9-day service interval for checking traps.
- Trap Limit – would establish an individual trap limit of 10 crab traps.
- Director Authority – would provide authority to the Director of CDFW to take in-season action to reduce marine life entanglement risk.
- Trap validation program - would establish a program to determine participation levels and/or fishing practices.