



Information on Upcoming Dungeness Crab Season

Summary of *Crab Trap Regulations*



This year, the recreational Dungeness crab season opens statewide on Saturday, November 4, 2017. The daily bag and possession limit

for Dungeness crab remains at ten crabs per day with the minimum size limit of 5¾ inches measured by the shortest distance through the body from the edges of the shell directly in front of and excluding the points (lateral spines). Dungeness crab can be taken in all ocean waters of the state where they occur, excluding San Francisco and San Pablo bays. They can be taken using hoop nets, crab traps and/or crab loop traps, also known as crab snares, or skin and scuba divers may take them by hand. Dungeness crab can be taken in freshwater areas of the state between Del Norte and Sonoma counties only by hand or hoop net during the open season, and the same daily bag and size limits apply.

Prior to the upcoming season opener, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) would like to remind crabbers of the regulations and procedures for crab traps that became effective last season:

- **Crab trap buoys must display the “GO ID” number of the operator of the trap.**

The GO ID number is the unique, 10-digit identifier assigned by the Automated License Data System to your profile. This number will appear on all documents purchased through CDFW (for example, your fishing license).

Crab traps not operated under the authority of a commercial passenger fishing vessel (also known as charter or party boat) must possess a buoy and each buoy must be legibly marked with the operator of the trap’s GO ID number as stated on his or her sport fishing license. This regulation will help to ensure that crab traps are being used by the designated operator of the trap in order to prevent others from unlawfully disturbing or removing crab from crab traps. If you are using another person’s trap, written permission from the owner of the trap must be in your possession in order to operate the trap. This regulation is not applicable to hoop nets.

- **Crab traps must contain at least one destruct device made from a single strand of untreated cotton twine size No. 120 or less that creates 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.**

Destruct devices prevent the continuous trapping of organisms in lost or abandoned trap gear, in a process known as “ghost fishing.” It is important that the cotton twine be a single strand and untreated in order for the material to corrode relatively quickly on lost or abandoned gear, and to keep the twine from snagging on itself once it comes apart. The smaller the size of twine used, the faster the material will corrode in lost or abandoned trap gear. The opening must be located in the top or upper half of the trap in case the trap becomes silted in over time. A common method to meet this requirement is the use of untreated cotton twine attached between the metal or plastic hook and the rubber strap that keeps the top of the trap lid (or trap side) closed. The cotton twine should be attached with a single loop in such a manner as to aid the destruct process. (See illustrations on Page 3)

- **Crab traps must not be deployed or fished seven days prior to the opening of the Dungeness crab season.**

For this upcoming season, crab traps used to take either Dungeness crab or rock crab can't be used or deployed in state waters from October 28, 2017 until the Dungeness crab fishery opens at 12:01 a.m. on November 4, 2017, and any crab traps found in ocean waters prior to this seven-day period should be removed from the water by October 27, 2017. This is to prevent the unlawful take of Dungeness crab before the season starts. Take is defined as hunting, catching, capturing or killing of fish, amphibians, reptiles, mollusks, crustaceans, or invertebrates, or attempting to do so.

Other regulations that remain in place for crab traps include that every crab trap 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. This is to allow small crabs to easily escape from the trap. Crab traps can only be used in state waters north of Point Arguello, Santa Barbara County. There is no limit to the number of crab traps that can be used by recreational crabbers, except the limit is 60 when operating under authority of a commercial passenger fishing vessel license.

CDFW would also like to inform recreational crabbers of the best practices with regards to deploying crab trap gear to reduce surface lines as much as possible in an effort to reduce entanglements with animals, especially marine mammals and sea turtles, as well as other vessels. More information can be found by accessing the *Best Practices Guide* released by the Dungeness Crab Gear Working Group, available online at <http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=150177&inline>. Although there is no time limit for the checking of crab trap gear (as there is for hoop nets), frequent visits will ensure that traps are in good working condition and that crab captured in the trap are not held for too long.

For the latest information, visit the CDFW website at www.wildlife.ca.gov/crabs.

Refer to Page 3 for photo examples of some techniques to accommodate the requirement that crab traps shall contain at least one destruct device of a single strand of untreated cotton twine size No. 120 or less that creates an unobstructed escape opening in the top or upper half of the trap of at least five inches in diameter when the destruct attachment material corrodes or fails.

****NOTE: The last picture on page 3 (Round Trap) has been changed from the original document to clearly show a single strand No. 120 cotton twine used between the rubber band & the hook.**

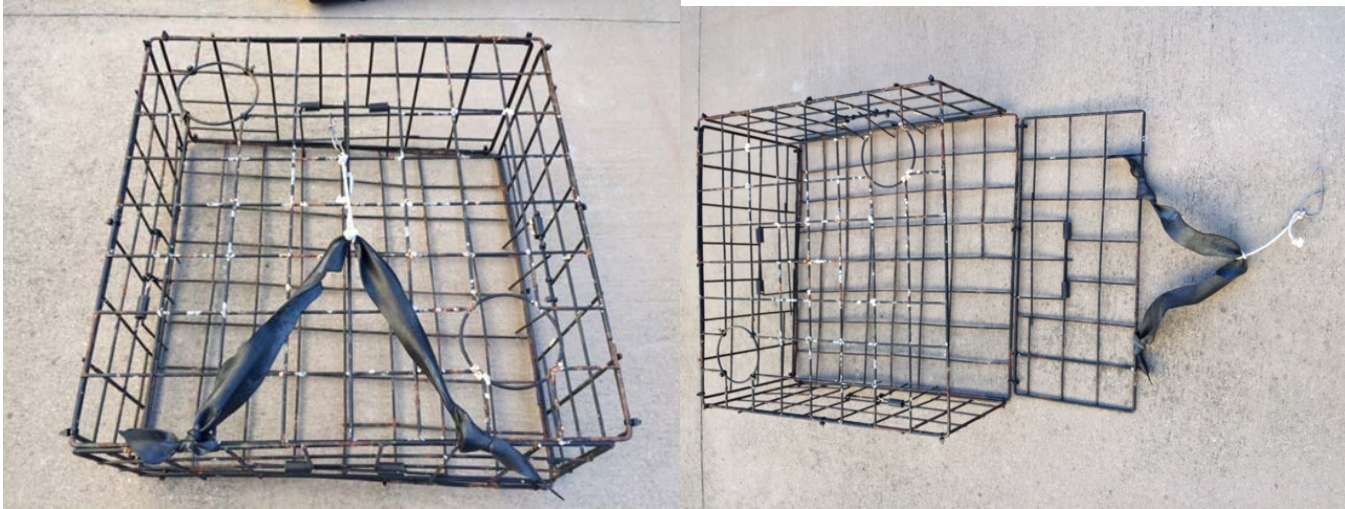
Dungeness crab illustration by Amadeo Bachar

Trap Photos by Andy Roberts & Joel Hendricks

Examples of 5" diameter Destruct Devices using single strand No. 120 untreated cotton twine.



#1-Box Trap with single strand No. 120 untreated cotton twine attached to 4 1/4" Escape Ring. #2 – Escape Ring removed. Corners of attachment points to the Escape Ring are bent down to achieve 5" diameter destruct device.



Box Trap using rubber strap, single strand No. 120 untreated cotton twine, and hook to secure side of trap. When No. 120 untreated cotton twine deteriorates, the open side of the trap meets 5" diameter destruct device.



Round Trap using rubber strap, single strand No. 120 untreated cotton twine, and hook to secure lid of the trap. When No. 120 untreated cotton twine deteriorates, the lid of the trap opens and meets 5" diameter destruct device.