



May 3, 2018

Dear Dungeness Crab Vessel Permit Holder,

The Department is reminding Dungeness crab fishermen that all gear must be removed by the end of the season. The season closes south of the Sonoma/Mendocino County line on Saturday, June 30. The season closes north of the Sonoma/Mendocino County line on Sunday, July 15. Dungeness crab traps remaining in the water after these season end dates will be considered in violation of Fish and Game Code section 8276, and may be subject to enforcement action. Post-season gear retrieval efforts for lost and abandoned gear can occur between July 16 and October 31. Within this timeframe, an unlimited number of commercial Dungeness crab traps can be removed by any Dungeness crab permitted vessel (Subsection (a)(2)(E) of 132.2, Title 14 California Code of Regulations).

The Dungeness crab Gear Working Group continues to pilot the Risk Assessment Mitigation Program (RAMP), and on March 14, 2018, they scored all the risk factors for whale entanglements as low. However, the Department would like to remind fishermen to follow the latest 2017-18 Best Practices Guide at all times to minimize interactions with whales, especially near the end of the season when more whales are likely to be present along the California coast. A summary of some best practices is included below.

- Fishermen should remove gear, and avoid setting gear, in areas where humpback whales are likely to be feeding or aggregating. Humpback whales prefer feeding on krill, which are strongly associated near the shelf break and edges of canyons. During good anchovy years, whales can congregate in the nearshore environment.
- Fishermen should consider minimizing the use or profile of trailer buoys. Recognizing that trailer buoys are used for very specific and important reasons, we recommend that fishermen consider working to reduce the amount of trailer buoys and surface line, as needed.
- Fishermen should work cooperatively to reduce the amount of gear currently set in any known “hot spots”. Central California is a known “hot spot” for humpback whale activity, especially from April-November.

Commercial Dungeness crab fishermen with any further questions should contact my staff during business hours, Sonke Mastrup, Invertebrate Program Manager: (916) 799-0398 or Christy Juhasz, Environmental Scientist: (707) 576-2887.

Dungeness Crab Vessel Permit Holder
Page 2 of 2
May 3, 2018

More Information on the Working Group and the RAMP Pilot can be found here:

<http://www.opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group/>

<http://www.opc.ca.gov/draft-risk-assessment-and-mitigation-program-ramp/>

http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/_media_library/2018/03/CAWorkingGroup_RAMPPilot_MidseasonRAF_KeyHighlights_2018.pdf

2017-18 Best Practices Guide:

<http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=150177&inline>

Sincerely,



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Marine Regional Manager

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