



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
DECLARATION OF FISHERY CLOSURE
DUE TO SIGNIFICANT RISK OF MARINE LIFE ENTANGLEMENT
IN THE DUNGENESS CRAB COMMERCIAL FISHERY

Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(c), I find and declare that

I.

The California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) met on April 9, 2020 to review available data and evaluate entanglement risk factors based on the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP).

II.

The four RAMP factors evaluated by the Working Group led to a majority recommendation for the Central and Northern Management Areas to remain open to commercial Dungeness crab fishing. In consideration of the number of Humpback whales increasing on their migration to fishing grounds in the Central Management area, a minority of Working Group members recommended a precautionary approach to management.

III.

Industry representatives on the Working Group indicated that four weeks would be needed to safely remove gear due to the unique operating conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the oceanographic forecast for strong coastal winds. The Working Group recommended by consensus that if action was to be taken at this time a four-week removal timeframe was appropriate.

IV.

Department staff conducted an independent assessment of available data related to the RAMP factors and the factors outlined in Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(c)(3), and recommended a closure of the Central Management Area (Districts 10, 17, 18 and 19). On April 15, 2020, I made a preliminary determination of significant risk of marine life entanglement. Notice of the preliminary determination and anticipated management action was provided to the Working Group and other stakeholders with opportunity to provide recommendations and new information through 5:30pm on April 17, 2020.

V.

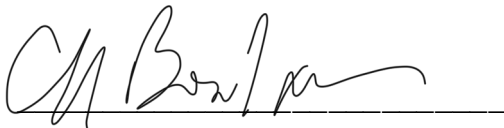
Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(c), after further consideration of the recommendation from the Working Group provided on April 9, 2020, and consideration

of recommendations and new information provided in response to the April 15, 2020, notice of preliminary determination of significant entanglement risk, I have determined that conducting the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery beyond May 15, 2020 in the Central Management Area poses a significant risk of marine life entanglement, and that the appropriate management response is a closure of the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery in that area, effective May 15, 2020.

VI.

THEREFORE, under the authority granted by Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(c)(1), I am closing the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in Districts 10, 17, 18 and 19. This closure requires all commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear to be removed from ocean waters in these districts by 11:59 p.m. on May 15, 2020, and possession of commercially caught Dungeness crab is prohibited.

The closure will remain in place for the remainder of the 2019-20 California commercial Dungeness crab season. Updates and material regarding future entanglement risk evaluations in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery will be made available on the Department's web page: www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries.



Charlton H. Bonham, Director

Apr. 22, 2020 2:15pm

Date/Time