



May 14, 2020

2019-2020 Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery Closure: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is the commercial Dungeness crab season closing early?

A: Pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 8276.1(c), the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife has determined that the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery south of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line (Central Management Area) would be conducted in a manner that poses a significant risk of marine life entanglement if allowed to continue beyond May 15, 2020. The closure is necessary to reduce the risk of entanglement to migrating Humpback and Blue whales as well as Pacific leatherback sea turtles on our coast.

Q: When will the commercial Dungeness crab fishery close south of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line?

A: The 2019-2020 commercial Dungeness crab season will close south of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line on May 15, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.

Q: How long can I make commercial Dungeness crab landings south of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line?

A: Dungeness crab can be harvested from and landed into ports south of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line until 11:59pm on May 15, 2020. Beginning at 12:00am on May 16, 2020, no vessel may take, possess or land crab south of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line.

Q: When do I need to have my commercial gear out of the water?

A: All gear (lines, pots, buoys) south of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line needs to be out of the water by 11:59pm on May 15, 2020. This includes un-baited gear, gear where the trap opening has been wired open, and gear that is staged nearshore.

Q: Will commercial Dungeness crab fishing activity north of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line be affected?

A: No. The fishery will remain open north of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line. However, fishery participants should follow the risk assessment process and be aware of any future management actions, including closures. More information can be found at: www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries

Q: Can I still make landings from my vessel within the closed area?

A: No. Landing or transiting with a vessel in possession of Dungeness crab in the closed area is prohibited.

Q: Can fish businesses located in ports adjacent to closed waters still make landings in that port?

A: Although a vessel is prohibited from landing Dungeness crab in a port included in the closed area, a fish business can still land crab that are brought to the business by land under a Fish Transportation Receipt.

Q: Are the recreational Dungeness crab fishery or other trap fisheries closing too?

A: This closure only applies to the commercial Dungeness crab fishery. Recreational (including commercial passenger fishing vessels) Dungeness crab, recreational and commercial rock crab, and other trap fisheries are not affected by the closure.

Q: What if I am unable to remove my gear by the May 15th deadline due to vessel breakdown or hardship? Can I request assistance from another vessel?

A: Pursuant to Section 132.2(b), Title 14, CCR a waiver may be granted by the department to retrieve another vessel's crab traps under the following conditions:

- (1) The holder of the Dungeness crab vessel permit to which the traps are assigned cannot retrieve the traps because the permitted vessel is incapacitated due to a major mechanical failure or destroyed due to fire, capsizing, or sinking, or due to undue hardship resulting from circumstances beyond the control of the permit holder.
- (2) The permit holder makes a request for a waiver in writing to the department's License and Revenue Branch.
- (3) A copy of the waiver approved by the department shall be on board the retrieving vessel.
- (4) The waiver may include conditions such as time restrictions, landing prohibitions, or any other conditions the department deems necessary.

A waiver can be requested from Ruth Flores, Commercial Fishing Analyst, at the Department's License and Revenue Branch at (916) 928-7470 or via email (Ruth.Flores@wildlife.ca.gov)

Q: When will the CDFW Lost or Abandoned Dungeness Crab Trap Gear Retrieval Program begin?

The Director has authorized activities south of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line under the Department's Lost or Abandoned Dungeness Crab Trap Gear Retrieval Program (Section 132.7, Title 14, CCR) starting at 6:00 a.m. on May 22, 2020. Holders of a CDFW Lost or Abandoned Commercial Dungeness Crab Trap Gear Retrieval Permit (Retrieval Permittee) and their authorized agents can retrieve an unlimited number of lost or abandoned commercial Dungeness crab traps between May 22, 2020 and September 30, 2020 and seek payment for retrieved traps. The Department encourages Dungeness crab vessel permitholders whose gear is retrieved under this program to cooperate when contacted by Retrieval Permittees; non-payment of a

reasonable recovery fee will result in owed fees and restrictions on permit renewal and transfer. Retrieval operations in the open area north of the Sonoma-Mendocino county line are not yet permitted.

Retrieval of lost or abandoned commercial Dungeness crab traps can also occur under Section 132.2(a), Title 14, CCR, which states commercial Dungeness crab vessel permitholders can have on board 6 traps which do not have buoy tags assigned to their vessels at any time, and an unlimited number between July 16 and October 31.

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: Additional information will be posted on the Department's webpage as it is made available: www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries and www.wildlife.ca.gov/crabs