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COMPLIANCE GUIDE FOR THE CALIFORNIA COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM

This compliance guide was prepared to help the commercial Dungeness crab fleet comply with new data collection requirements under the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP).

GENERAL

Q: What is an electronic monitoring system?

A: An electronic monitoring system consists of equipment that is capable of tracking a vessel's geographic position.

Q: What comprises an electronic monitoring system?

A: An electronic monitoring system may consist of several components depending upon the application. The primary component is equipment that can capture and store the vessel's geographic position. In most circumstances, a second component would be required that can transmit the location data to a specified recipient for processing and sharing using a satellite or cellular system.

Q: Why does the commercial Dungeness crab fishery need an electronic monitoring program?

A: The RAMP mandates new data reporting requirements which are necessary to support collection of essential fishery information. Electronic monitoring will be used by managers to track fleet-wide trends based on fishing effort to help inform the potential for risk of entanglement with whales and sea turtles. Law enforcement personnel will also use it to monitor compliance in closed areas, depth restrictions, fair start, etc.

Q: What do I need for the 2022-2023 Fishing Season?

A: During the 2022-2023 Fishing Season, all vessels must have a functioning electronic monitoring device affixed to your vessel if you plan to fish when a depth constraint has been implemented.

Q: What do I need for the 2023-2024 Fishing Season?

A: Starting in the 2023-2024 Fishing Season, all vessels participating in the fishery will need to have an electronic monitoring system when engaged in fishing activity (see System Requirements for specifications on system capabilities).

Q: Can I receive an exemption to the electronic monitoring requirement?

A: No, exemptions are not allowed.

Q: Who pays for the costs associated with electronic monitoring?

A: The vessel owner or operator is responsible for purchasing the equipment and paying all charges from the communication service provider to ensure continuous operation of the electronic monitoring transceiver units while actively fishing.

Q: Are there any funding opportunities to reduce the cost of equipment?

A: The Department is currently exploring opportunities to obtain equipment to defray industry costs.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Q: What are the requirements for an electronic monitoring system?

A: RAMP regulations specify that vessels must have an operational electronic monitoring system affixed to their vessel. The equipment must be capable of recording the vessel's location using GPS coordinates at a frequency of no less than once a minute during fishing operations.

Q: Why is the ping rate set at once per minute?

A: Given the speed at which gear can be deployed and retrieved in this fishery, a ping rate of one ping per minute will allow the Department to differentiate between actively fishing and transiting and will be helpful in determining potential for co-occurrence with whales and sea turtles.

Q: Does data need to be reported or transmitted in real time?

A: No. The RAMP regulations specify data shall be made available to the Department or authorized agent upon request for the 2022-2023 Fishing Season, and within 72-hours of request during the 2023-2024 Fishing Season and beyond.

Q: How does the Department get access to vessel tracking data?

A: Data must be made available to the Department upon request for the 2022-2023 Fishing Season or within 72-hours of request (starting in the 2023-2024 Fishing Season). The Department recommends individuals work with their specific service provider to ensure their service agreement contains a provision granting the Department access to these data. Data must be provided to the Department within the specified time frame for an individual to be in compliance with the regulations.

EQUIPMENT

Q: What types of equipment can I use?

A: The regulations do not specify a particular vendor or type of equipment to provide maximum flexibility. The electronic monitoring system should comply with the requirements in the RAMP regulations (ping rates, data access, etc.). If you have questions about whether a particular system will comply, please contact the Department at WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov.

Q: Can a single electronic monitoring system be used on more than one vessel?

A: Possibly. The regulations require any vessel participating in the fishery to record GPS coordinates showing activity for that vessel. So long as the location data can be identified to that specific vessel, the system could be used on more than one vessel. For example, if a fisherman has two permitted vessels that participate in the fishery during different periods of the season, the system could be used on both boats so long as both vessels were not fishing at the same time and the location data can be traced to each specific vessel.

Q: I have a vessel monitoring system (VMS) on my vessel already. Can I use that to satisfy the requirement?

A: No. VMS systems cannot be used because they do not satisfy the requirements specified in regulation. VMS ping rates for federally managed fisheries range between one to four pings per hour (as opposed to once per minute) and VMS data cannot be made available to the Department in the time frames required under the RAMP regulation.

Q: Can AIS be used to satisfy the requirement?

A: Possibly. The U.S. Coast Guard requires commercial vessels 65 feet and longer that operate in U.S. waters to be equipped with an Automatic Identification System or AIS. While AIS appears to satisfy the ping rate, the Department is still exploring whether this

system will meet the other requirements specified in regulations pertaining to timing and availability of data. Individuals interested in using AIS should contact the Department at WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov.

Q: I have an electronic monitoring system that includes cameras and gear sensors. Can I use that to satisfy the electronic monitoring requirement?

A: As long as the equipment is capable of tracking and transmitting GPS data consistent with the RAMP regulations, an electronic monitoring system with cameras or gear sensors should satisfy the requirement but are not required in the RAMP regulation.

Q: Can I use a solar logger?

A: As long as the solar logger meets the requirements of the regulations (ping rate, data availability, etc.) it could be used. The RAMP regulations do not specify the type of power source for electronic monitoring equipment. Solar powered or hard-wired equipment may be used.

Q: How long will the battery last on a solar logger? Will it work in foggy, low light, or nighttime conditions?

A: Because equipment will vary by manufacturer, we recommend contacting the vendor directly to ensure that equipment will meet RAMP requirements.

Q: What if my electronic monitoring equipment malfunctions or the battery runs out during a fishing trip?

A: It is an individual's responsibility to ensure that their equipment is fully charged and working properly before engaging in any fishing activity. Fishing without functioning electronic monitoring when electronic monitoring equipment is required is a violation of regulation.

OTHER

Q: Do I need to file a declaration when I start fishing like with federally managed fisheries?

A: No, under RAMP you do not need to file a declaration with the Department when you start fishing in the California Dungeness crab fishery. If you also participate in federally managed fisheries you will need to defer to those declaration requirements.

Q: Do I need electronic monitoring when I am done fishing for the season?

A: No, once you are done fishing for the season you are no longer required to have an electronic monitoring system on your vessel.

Q: Do I need RFID tags for my traps?

A: No. Although RFID tags or “radio frequency identification” tags are being tested in other trap fisheries, they are not required to be used on commercial Dungeness crab traps under the RAMP. Regulations do not prohibit the use of this technology, so an individual may use RFID tags to track their trap gear.

Q: Who can I talk to if I have more questions?

A: Please direct any questions to WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov.