



2025-26 Recreational Dungeness Crab Season

Information on Crab Trap Restrictions:

- [Latest Season Information Due to Public Health Hazards](#)
- Crab traps may be restricted by [RAMP Zone](#) due to elevated marine life entanglement risk by CDFW, see [FAQs](#).
- Notice will be provided a minimum of 5 days prior to a crab trap restriction. Please sign up for email updates at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries>.
- Access of the latest Risk Assessment information, can be found here for the [2025-26 season](#).
- Current regulations for crab traps are listed on page 2, please see this hoop net [regulation summary](#).

Summary of current regulations for the recreational take of Dungeness crab.

Fishing Area	Season Date(s)	Minimum Size Limit (must possess a measuring device)	Daily Bag/Possession Limit	Gear Type
Ocean waters (excludes San Francisco and San Pablo bays where no Dungeness crab can be taken)	Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025 – Thursday, July 30, 2026 (Mendocino County and north) Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025 – Tuesday, June 30, 2026 (all other counties)	5 ¾" measured as the shortest distance through the body from edges of shell directly in front and excluding lateral spines.	10	Taken by hand, crab trap, hoop net, or by crab snare with up to 6 loops. When crab traps are restricted due to elevated entanglement risk, take by hand, hoop net, or crab snare is allowed.

Crab Traps:

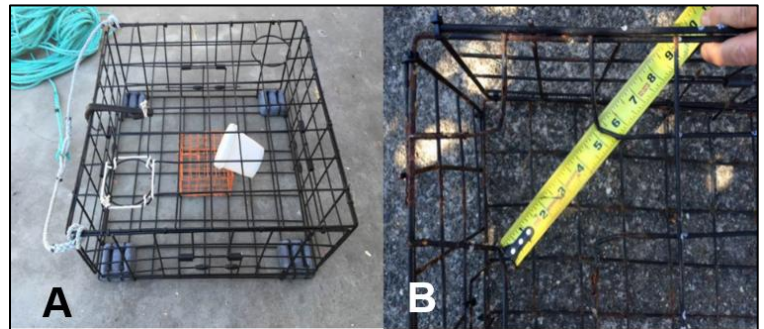
- **Crab Trap Validation:** Required for an individual when using a crab trap, even when no license is required. **Please see [updated FAQ here when fishing from a charter vessel](#)**. This can be [purchased online](#) (cost is currently \$2.98).
- **Surface Gear Marking:** Crab traps must be rigged with a **single main buoy that is at least 5 inches in diameter and 11 inches in length and legibly marked with the operator of the trap's GO ID number** as stated on their sport fishing license. Traps shall also be marked with a **single red marker buoy that is 3 inches in diameter and 5 inches in length and attached no more than 3 feet from the main buoy** (see example in photo, below). Crab traps used by a commercial passenger fishing vessel (CPFV) shall have the commercial boat registration number affixed to each trap and main buoy. No additional markers or trailer buoys may be used.



Example configuration of a main buoy and a red marker buoy attached to crab traps.
Photo by C. Juhasz, CDFW.

- **Service Interval:** Crab traps must be raised, cleaned and emptied (serviced) at intervals not to exceed nine (9) days.
- **Trap Limits:** An individual may operate up to ten (10) crab traps and service ten additional (10) crab traps with written permission from the operator of the trap.
- **Written permission** from the operator of the trap, including permission transmitted electronically (for example, email or text), must be in your possession to operate the trap of another individual.
- **Crab Trap Area:** Crab traps (including crab loop traps) may only be used North of Point Arguello, Santa Barbara County except when crab traps are restricted due to elevated entanglement risk.

- Crab traps must not be deployed or fished **seven days prior to the opening** of the Dungeness crab season.
- **Escape Openings:** Crab traps must 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 (see photo, below).
- **Destruct Device:** Crab traps must contain at least one destruct device made from a single strand of untreated cotton twine size No. 120 or less. The destruct device must create 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 (see photo, below).



A recreational box-style crab trap (A), with two required 4¼-inch escape rings placed on the top of the trap, one with a ring tied in place using No. 120 untreated cotton twine, which serves as the destruct device. When this material corrodes or fails, it will create a large enough opening (B).
Photo by J. Langell and J. Hendricks, CDFW.



Round-style crab trap with plastic hook attached by the destruct device. The lid will open when the device corrodes or fails. Photo by J. Langell and J. Hendricks, CDFW