

California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) Management Recommendation Form to inform the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Working Group Discussion Date: November 17, 2021

Anticipated Director's Determination Date: November 19, 2021

Submitted to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Director for the Risk Assessment Mitigation Program Section 132.8 Title 14, California Code of Regulations to assess marine life entanglement risk in the Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery.

The Working Group considered Available Data provided by CDFW and scientific advisors, as well as an initial CDFW assessment and the preliminary Management Action recommendation. The Available Data, initial and final versions of CDFW's assessment as well as this recommendation will be made available on the [Whale Safe Fisheries webpage](#) upon completion of the risk assessment process.

Working Group Recommendations

Fishing Zones 1 and 2

Recommends that the commercial fishery open as scheduled on December 1 (assuming no delays are needed due to low crab quality or domoic acid). Commercial fishery participants should implement best practices, but CDFW should not open the fishery under a Fleet Advisory. The recreational fishery should remain open in Fishing Zones 1 and 2. While recreational fishery participants should continue to implement best practices, the Fleet Advisory should be lifted beginning December 1.

The rationale for this recommendation was because marine life concentration triggers have not been met for these Fishing Zones. The Working Group noted that economic impacts from prior actions under RAMP (e.g., season delays and early closures) during the last three fishing seasons are more extensive than indicated by [CDFW's November 15, 2021 Initial Assessment](#). In the absence of attaining a specified RAMP trigger, and given the anticipated economic impact to the fleet, a management action for these Fishing Zones is not warranted.

Several Working Group members expressed support for this recommendation, with none opposed. The remaining Working Group members either abstained or remained neutral. The recommendation was deemed to have broad support.

Fishing Zones 3 and 4

Recommends an ongoing delay for the commercial season opener in Fishing Zones 3 and 4. No additional rationale was expressed beyond what was provided in [CDFW's November 15, 2021 Initial Assessment](#) and the Working Group supported the rationale as described by CDFW preliminary recommendation. There was broad support for CDFW's preliminary recommendation of an ongoing delay for the commercial season

opener in Fishing Zones 3 and 4 and a continued crab trap restriction for the recreational fishery in those Zones.

A recommendation was also put forward to immediately lift the recreational crab trap restriction in Fishing Zones 3 and 4, but it did not receive support from the Working Group.

The Working Group requested CDFW work with Advisors and other RAMP data contributors to compile available data and reconvene the Working Group as soon as possible (no later than December 1, 2021) to evaluate the need for additional management actions in these Fishing Zones. In addition, if the commercial season opener is delayed beyond December 15, 2021, the Working Group recommends CDFW allow the simultaneous use of traps in both the commercial and recreational fisheries. Specifically, the Working Group recommends against CDFW providing any additional “head start” for the recreational fishery. Working Group members noted that the recreational fishery opened on November 6, 2021, and there has been ongoing harvest with other types of gear (e.g., hoop nets) since that time. If the commercial opener is delayed beyond December 15, 2021, and there is an additional period of recreational-only harvest, there will be no opportunity for the commercial fishery to harvest crab in time for the holiday markets. There was mixed support for the recommendation regarding recreational “head start”; recreational members and one commercial member were opposed, with other members in support and several either abstaining or remaining neutral.

[Other Working Group requests](#)

The Working Group requested CDFW work with RAMP data contributors to clearly delineate between sightings, total observed individuals, number of uniquely identified individuals, and other methods of presenting abundance within the marine life concentration sections of the Available Data document. Additionally, the Working Group requested CDFW provide additional information regarding economic impacts of RAMP management actions during future assessments. Lastly, the Working Group requested CDFW schedule discussions regarding questions of recreational “head start” and integration of the recreational fishery into RAMP during future meetings.