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**2025-2026 Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery -
 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

The following serves as a compendium of the operations of the fishing season and will be updated as needed. Please send any additional inquiries to:

WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov.

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NEW RAMP REGULATIONS (effective Oct 21, 2025)

Q: Under RAMP 2.0, how has Impact Scoring changed?

A: Impact Scoring was removed during the recent RAMP regulatory update. The 3-year rolling average and in-season impact scores will no longer be calculated. Instead, entanglements will be accounted for by each calendar year, beginning on January 1 and tracked to ensure they align with the requirements of an Incidental Take Permit (when issued by NOAA Fisheries).

In addition, a Confirmed Entanglement with a humpback whale in Unknown Fishing Gear will be considered 0.25 of a Confirmed Entanglement in CA Commercial Dungeness Crab Gear (see Table 1). Unknown Fishing Gear entanglements will be phased out at the full implementation of line marking at the start of the 2028-29 season.

For three or more Confirmed Entanglements of Humpback Whales in California Commercial Dungeness Crab Gear during a calendar year or in combination with Unknown Fishing Gear, the Director shall close the remainder of the current Fishing Season statewide and the following Fishing Season shall not open until January 1 of the next calendar year. See Table 2 for mandatory closures and other management actions for all Actionable Species.

Table 1. Phased proration of humpback whale, blue whale and leatherback sea turtle entanglements (take).

Actionable Species	Unknown Fishing Gear Score, effective Nov. 1, 2025	Unknown Fishing Gear Score, effective Nov. 1, 2028
Humpback Whale	0.25	0
Blue Whale	0.25	0
Leatherback Sea Turtle	0.25	0

Table 2. Mandatory Closures and Other Management Actions

Actionable Species	Trigger	Action
Humpback Whales	1 Confirmed Entanglement of a Humpback Whale in CA Commercial Dungeness Crab Gear	Fishing Zone closure, or other management action
	3 or more Confirmed Entanglements of Humpback Whales in CA Commercial Dungeness Crab Gear during a calendar year	Statewide closure, the following season to open no earlier than Jan. 1 (effective Jan. 1, 2026)
Blue Whales	1 Confirmed Entanglement of a Blue Whale in CA Commercial Dungeness Crab Gear	Statewide closure, the next two calendar years the Fishing Season shall close no later than April 1 statewide
Leatherback Sea Turtle	1 Confirmed Entanglement of a Leatherback Sea Turtle in CA Commercial Dungeness Crab Gear	Fishing Zones 3 and 4 closure, the following nine calendar years the Fishing Season in Fishing Zones 3 and 4 shall not open until January 1 and shall close no later than June 1

Q: What is required for electronic monitoring?

A: The Department procured electronic monitoring devices that satisfy the current requirements of RAMP. The distribution of these devices began in Fall 2023 to all CA permitted Dungeness crab vessels. Every Dungeness crab permit holder shall ensure that their vessel has a **satellite or cellular** based electronic monitoring system designed to monitor location and movement of vessels using

global positioning system (GPS) coordinates installed onboard. The system shall accurately track and record a vessel's location at a frequency of **no less than once a minute** during an entire fishing trip when the vessel possesses any Dungeness crab or Dungeness crab trap onboard, when the vessel possesses any Dungeness crab trap onboard, when the vessel owner/operator has Dungeness crab gear present or placed in any Fishing Zone, or when the vessel is otherwise participating in the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery. Vessel location data **shall be uploaded automatically** and made available to the Department or an authorized agent within 24 hours. Please review the [Electronic Monitoring Compliance Guide](#) for more information.

Q: What Line Marking is required?

A: Line marking is being phased into the commercial fishery following the timeline below:

- **2025 - 2026 Season:** All surface gear must be marked as shown in Figure 1.

By November 2025:
Surface Gear

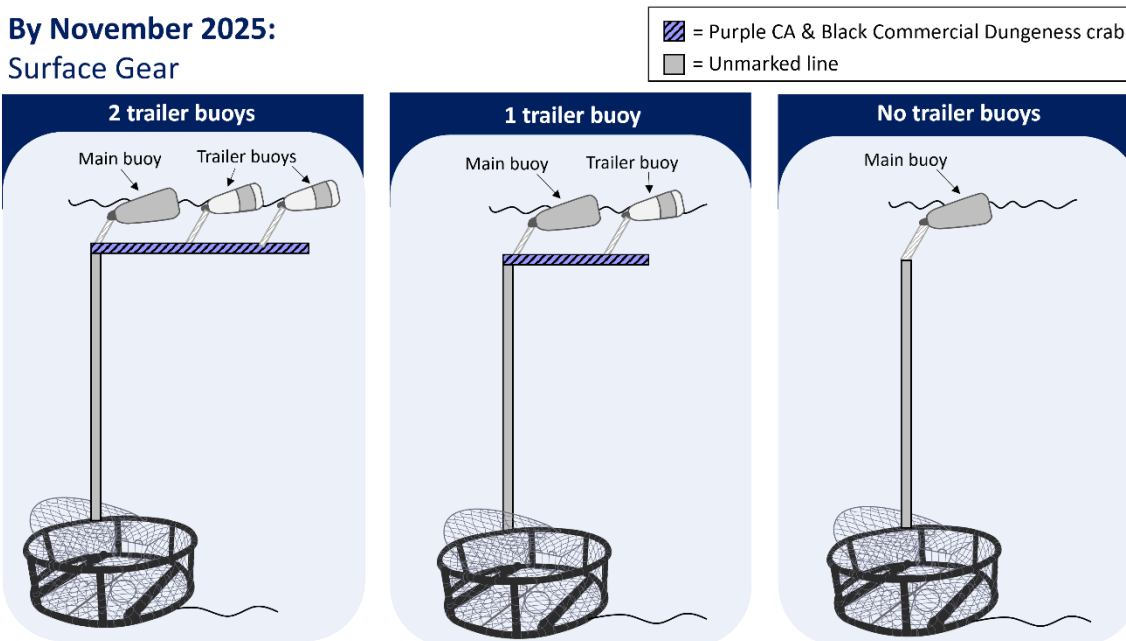


Figure 1. Schematic of surface gear line marking to begin on Nov. 1, 2025.

- **2026 - 2027 Season:** Upper 15 fathoms of 25% of deployed gear and all surface gear must be marked as shown in Figure 2.

- **2027 - 2028 Season:** Upper 15 fathoms of 50% of deployed gear and all surface gear must be marked as shown in Figure 2.
- **2028 - 2029 Season:** Upper 15 fathoms of 100% of deployed gear and all surface gear must be marked as shown in Figure 2.

November 2026 - November 2028:
Surface Gear & Upper 15 Fathoms

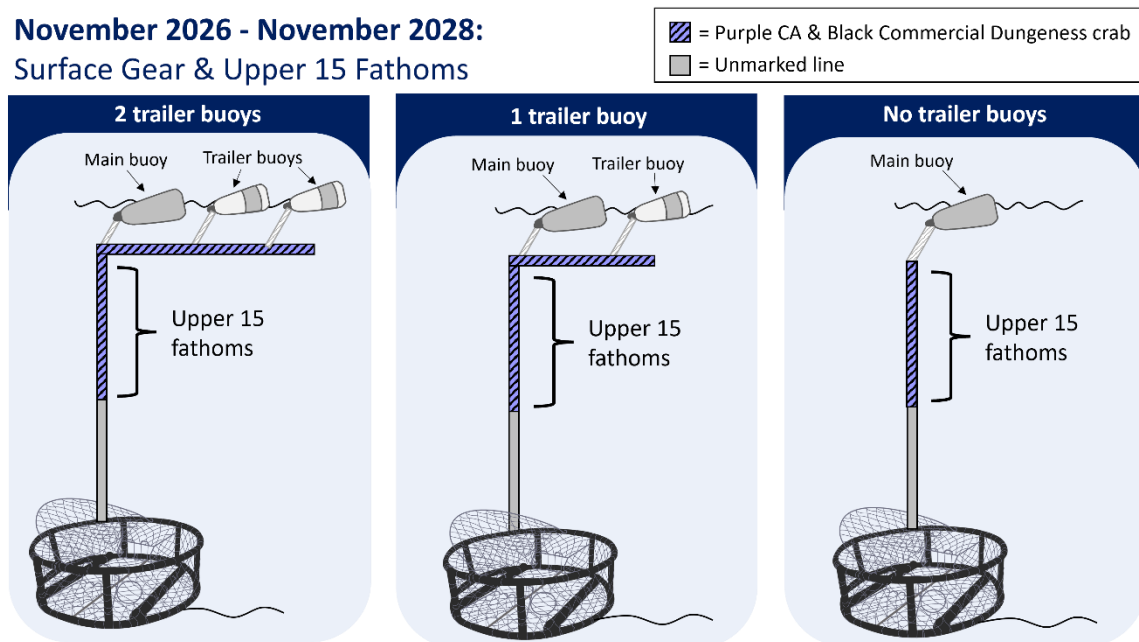


Figure 2. Schematic of vertical line marking to begin Nov. 1, 2026.

Q: How do I mark my buoys?

A: Every trap used to take finfish or crustaceans shall be marked with a buoy (Fish and Game Code 9006). Each buoy attached to a trap used to take Dungeness crab or hagfish shall be marked with the commercial fishing license identification number only. Additionally, any trap used without a buoy, or with a buoy which is not marked pursuant to Section 9006, is a public nuisance and shall be removed from the waters of this state by any person authorized to enforce this code (Fish and Game Code 9007). A current Department-issued biennial buoy tag is required to be affixed to the main buoy of every Dungeness crab trap on board or fished from a permitted vessel (Section 132.1, Title 14, California Code of Regulations).

Q: Were there changes to Alternative Gear Authorization?

A: The requirements for Alternative Gear remained largely the same, including detectability to prevent fishing in closed areas. The public must also be granted free access to approximate gear locations to minimize the potential for gear conflict or loss. Alternative Gear authorization will be constrained by one or more of the following: (1) Limited to a Fishing Zone, (2) Limited to a specified depth, (3) Limited to a maximum number of traps, (4) Notification requirements prior to deployment of gear, and (5) Other conditions necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of this section as determined by the Department. Please check the [Whale Safe Fisheries webpage](#) for updates and additional information.

Q: Are there changes to RAMP Fishing Zones?

A: Yes, RAMP Fishing Zones 6 and 7 were removed (Figure 3).

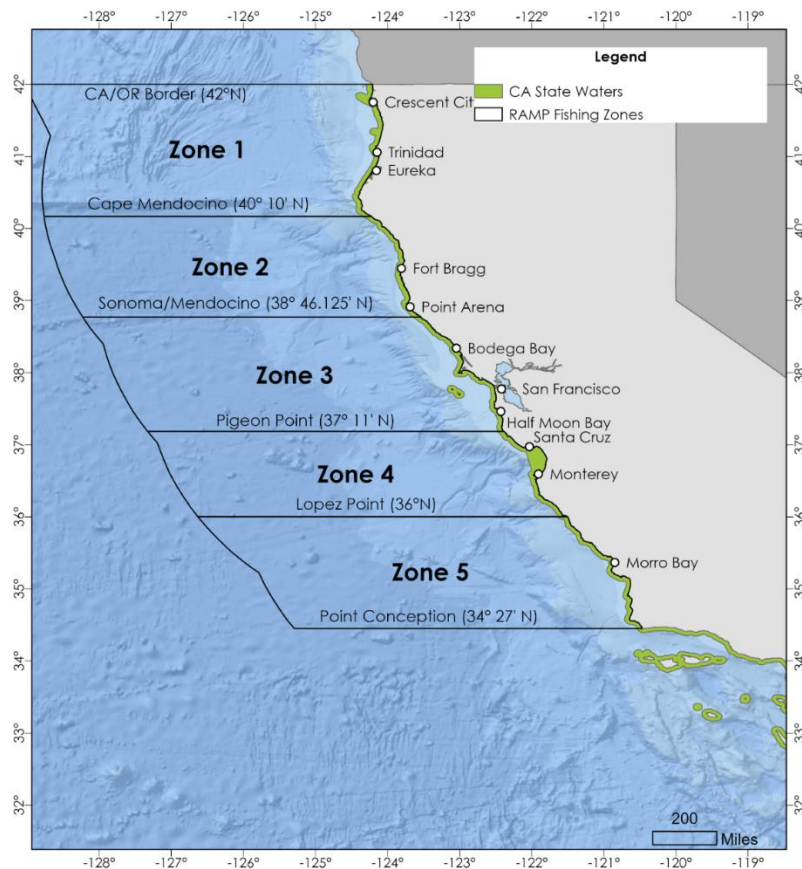


Figure 3. Map of RAMP Fishing Zones, effective October 21, 2025.

Q: Did bi-weekly reporting requirements change from current regulations?

A: Yes, every Dungeness crab permit holder is required to submit reports when any Dungeness crab gear, **including Alternative Gear**, are present or placed in any Fishing Zone for the purpose of commercially taking Dungeness crab. Permit holders need to continuously submit reports until their fishing activities have ceased for the fishing season.

There are also two new fields added to each bi-weekly report. These are denoted in **bold**, as follows and see Table 3 for an example:

1. **Report date for which 2 - 6 applies (e.g., February 1, February 16, March 1, etc.)**
2. Permit number
3. Fishing Zone(s) where traps are deployed
4. Depth range of traps deployed
5. Number of traps deployed
6. **Number of newly lost traps, if any**

Table 3. Example of the new bi-weekly report to be submitted to the Department. A separate report should be submitted for each Fishing Zone fished.

Required Information	Example Submission
1. Report date	February 1
2. Permit Number	CT0123-T4
3. Fishing Zone*	3
4. Depth range of traps deployed (fathoms)	20-30
5. Number of traps deployed	265
6. Number of newly lost traps	2

Additionally, **two weeks after the submission of a final report** of the fishing season, each Dungeness crab permit holder shall also report the **cumulative number of traps lost during the Fishing Season and the serial sequence number**

of the biennial buoy tag issued pursuant to subsection 132.1(b) of these regulations attached to each lost trap (Table 4).

Table 4. Example of the two-week post-final bi-weekly report to be submitted to the Department.

Required Information	Examples of Participant's Response
1) Report Total Number of Lost Traps	5
2) Serial Sequence Number	CT0123-T4: 003, 015, 087, 141, 223

BI-WEEKLY REPORTING (More information)

Q: Where do I submit the bi-weekly reports?

A: Reports, including the two-week post-final bi-weekly report, can still be submitted via email or text to Whalesafefisheries@wildlife.ca.gov, or using the form link below: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries/Crab-Report>



Q: Can you explain these reporting period deadlines?

A: Bi-weekly reports are required to be submitted on or before the 1st or 16th of the month. Reporting time periods refer to when commercial Dungeness crab gear is present or placed in any Fishing Zone from the last due date to the day before the next due date. For instance, if you begin setting gear on January 2nd, then the first report would be due on January 16th until you are finished fishing and no longer have active Dungeness crab gear in any Fishing Zone. If you pull your last commercial trap out of California ocean waters and bring to shore (stack out) on May 20th, then you are required to submit a final report on or

before June 1st. As a reminder, you must indicate the report period for every bi-weekly report.

Q: What reports are needed once I stack out all my traps?

A: When you stack out by bringing all commercial Dungeness crab gear to shore, please submit a final biweekly report with the correct report period and all other required fields filled out as any previous reports. If you stack out May 16, then you would indicate a June 1 report period.

Another report is due two weeks after you submitted this final bi-weekly report when you must provide a total lost trap number and the serial sequence number of the biennial buoy tag attached to each of these lost traps. If you submitted your final biweekly report on June 1, then you would submit this two-week post-final bi-weekly report on June 15. These reports shall be submitted via email or text to Whalesafefisheries@wildlife.ca.gov or using the form link provided in this document.

Q: My vessel is dually permitted in Oregon and California. I fished in California and Oregon, but made landings in Oregon. Am I required to submit a bi-weekly report?

A: Yes, if your dually permitted vessel has commercial Dungeness crab gear present or placed in any Fishing Zone in California for the purpose of commercially taking Dungeness crab, then you must submit bi-weekly reports.

Q: My vessel is dually permitted in Oregon and California. I only fished in Oregon, but I made a landing in California. Am I required to submit a bi-weekly report?

A: The bi-weekly reporting requirement only applies to Dungeness crab permitted vessels that have Dungeness crab gear present or placed in any Fishing Zone in California for the purpose of commercially taking Dungeness crab. If, for example, a vessel is only landing crab in California provided no Dungeness gear is deployed in California, then you are not required to submit a bi-weekly report. A landing originating from Oregon should reflect the appropriate [fishing block number for Oregon](#) on the landing receipt.

GEAR REDUCTIONS

Q: Is a gear reduction based on my trap tier?

A: Yes, a gear reduction is based on the permitted vessel's trap tier. To be in compliance with the gear reduction, each operator must have the requisite number of unused buoy tags in possession and available for inspection by law enforcement personnel **onboard the fishing vessel**. The buoy tags must be from the current bi-annual buoy tag allotment. Example trap allotments by tier are shown for either a 15% or 40% gear reduction in Table 5.

Table 5. Maximum trap allotments by trap tier including number of unused tags.

Tier	Maximum Trap Allotment under 15% Gear Reduction	Maximum Trap Allotment under 40% Gear Reduction
Tier 1 (500)	425 – 75 unused tags	300 – 200 unused tags
Tier 2 (450)	383 – 67 unused tags	270 – 180 unused tags
Tier 3 (400)	340 – 60 unused tags	240 – 160 unused tags
Tier 4 (350)	298 – 52 unused tags	210 – 140 unused tags
Tier 5 (300)	255 – 45 unused tags	180 – 120 unused tags
Tier 6 (250)	213 – 37 unused tags	150 – 100 unused tags
Tier 7 (175)	149 – 26 unused tags	105 – 70 unused tags

Q: Under a gear reduction, what do I do with the unused buoy tags?

A: Unused buoy tags must be removed from buoys and cannot be attached to any gear. CDFW recommends that you bundle the buoy tags together with a zip tie or other device to make it easier for law enforcement personnel to inspect. Bundles of 25 tags will allow Wildlife Officers to quickly check your vessel for compliance.

Q: Do I need to keep unused buoy tags in sequential order?

A: No, unused buoy tags do not need to be in sequential order.

Q: I lost buoy tags mid-season which have not been replaced. What number of buoy tags do I need to have in my possession?

A: Reduction is based on tier allotment, not how many buoy tags a vessel has in possession. A vessel is still required to have the number of unused buoy tags onboard that is equal to the percent reduction of their trap tier buoy tag allotment.

Q: Am I allowed to transit a Zone that is operating under a trap reduction from another Zone that is open to its full trap allotment?

A: Yes, but the vessel must have the number of buoy tags onboard that correspond to the percent reduction of their trap tier while transiting the area that is under a gear reduction. Pursuant to the Director's Declaration, vessels transiting through a zone subject to a trap reduction are effectively limited to the percent reduction.

Q: Am I allowed to transit a Zone that is operating under a different trap reduction from another Zone?

A: Yes, but if the vessel is transiting to an area with a higher percent reduction, they must have the number of buoy tags onboard that correspond to their trap tier in that Zone.

LANDING AND POSSESSION RESTRICTIONS DUE TO DELAYS OR CLOSURES

Q: Can Dungeness crab be landed from a vessel in District 6, 7, 8, and 9 during a delay due to poor crab quality?

A: No. It is prohibited for a vessel to take or land Dungeness crab north of the Sonoma/Mendocino county line to the California/Oregon border (Districts 6, 7, 8 and 9), until the Director orders the opening of the season pursuant to [Fish and Game Code section 8276.3](#).

Q: If an area delayed for public health reasons (e.g. domoic acid) includes a port of landing, can a vessel land Dungeness crab caught outside a delayed area at that port?

A: Under [Fish and Code section 5523](#), a vessel may transit waters closed due to a public health risk (such as the biotoxin domoic acid) if the vessel complies with electronic monitoring requirements as specified by the Department. However, the Department has not yet finalized the electronic monitoring requirement for public health closures. When available, electronic monitoring requirements and the ability to transit will be specified in the closure declaration.

Q: How are fish businesses in ports adjacent to closed or delayed waters affected by the delay?

A: Although a vessel is prohibited from possessing or landing Dungeness crab in a port included in closed or delayed waters, a fish business can still receive crab that were taken and possessed in open waters but are brought to the business by land under a Fish Transportation Receipt.

Q: If an area is closed or delayed due to entanglement risk, can a vessel possess Dungeness crab in that area provided it was caught outside the delayed/closed area?

A: No, Dungeness crab may not be taken, possessed, or sold, or landed from any commercial fishing vessel in any closed or delayed fishing zone.

Q: Can I sell live crab that was landed and caught from an open Fishing Zone after the fishing zone closes?

A: Provided the crab was landed with an electronic fish ticket before the fishing zone closed and you are licensed under Sections 8033, 8034, or 8035 of the Fish and Code, you have 240 hours (approximately 10 days) to sell live crab before it must be processed, (i.e., cooked or cooked and frozen).

FAIR START (Fishing Season Delays in California)

Q: What is the fair start provision?

A: The fair start provision described under [Fish and Game Code section 8279.1](#) prohibits a vessel from taking, possessing onboard, or landing crab in an area previously delayed due to marine life entanglement risk, crab quality, or human health risk (e.g., domoic acid) for a period of 30 days from the date of the opening if that vessel previously participated in other commercial Dungeness crab fishing areas (including those in Oregon and Washington) during the same season.

Q: How does a vessel become subject to California's fair start provision?

A: Two conditions have to be met for a vessel to be subject to California's fair start provision:

- 1) the delayed area qualifies under the provision (e.g., marine life entanglement risk, crab quality, or human health risk), and
- 2) the vessel has already participated in the Dungeness crab fishery in another area **prior to the opening date** of the delayed area. Prior fishing activity in any part of California, Oregon, or Washington (excluding Puget Sound) would count as participating in a qualifying Dungeness crab fishery for the purposes of fair start.

Q: Does the fair start provision apply to delayed RAMP Zone(s) due to marine life entanglement risk?

A: Yes, the fair start provision is applicable to any RAMP Zone in California where the season opening in that zone is delayed for commercial Dungeness crab fishing due to marine life entanglement risk under RAMP. A vessel that is subject to fair start must wait 30 days after the delayed RAMP Zone, or any part thereof, opens before they can take, possess onboard, or land Dungeness crab in that Zone. When a delayed RAMP Zone opens under a depth restriction or a gear reduction, the 30-day wait begins on the first day any part of that Zone opens to fishing activity.

UPDATED Q: If my vessel waited for a delayed area to open, can I set gear in the newly opened area AND the current open area during the gear set period?

A: No. The gear set period only applies to the area that was delayed and is newly opened. By setting gear in an open area not under the same delay you would be taking crab in that area in advance of the new opening of the delayed area, thereby triggering fair start for the newly opened area, and the 30-day wait period would apply. However, you can begin to set gear in the already opened area at the starting time on the first day when the delayed area opens.

For instance, a Biotoxin Management Area is delayed due to domoic acid, while the area north remains open. A vessel can set gear within the closed Biotoxin Management Area during the gear set period but must wait to set gear in the open area until the starting time of the first day that the delayed Biotoxin Management Area opens, otherwise the vessel would become subject to fair start.

NEW Q: Can you provide me with the Fair Start dates for all areas that are open to fishing in California during the 2025-26 season?

A: Yes. Please refer to Table 6, for all current Fair Start dates this 2025-26 season for every discrete commercial Dungeness crab fishing area listed north to south. The table will be updated once a start date for a delayed area is determined. If your vessel is subject to Fair Start, then you must wait 30 days before setting gear in the newly opened area.

Table 6. 2025-26 Season start dates and Fair Start dates for every discrete California commercial Dungeness crab fishing area.

California Area (Listed North to South)	Season Start Date	30-Day Fair Start Date for Vessels Subject to Fair Start
CA/OR Border (42° 0.0' N. lat.) to southern boundary of Reading Rock Marine Protected Areas (41° 17.6' N. lat.) to	Jan. 15, 2026	Feb. 14, 2026
Southern boundary of Reading Rock Marine Protected Areas (41° 17.6' N. lat.) to Cape Mendocino (40° 10.0' N. lat.)	Jan. 30, 2026	Mar. 1, 2026
Cape Mendocino (40° 10.0' N. lat.) to Sonoma/Mendocino County Line (38° 46.125' N. Lat.) to	Jan. 15, 2026	Feb. 14, 2026
South of Sonoma/Mendocino County Line (38° 46.125' N. Lat.)	Jan. 5, 2026	Feb. 4, 2026

Q: If my vessel waited for the last delayed area that is subject to fair start in California to open, can I transit in possession of and/or land Dungeness crab outside of the delayed area?

A: Yes. A vessel that waited for the last delayed area in California to open to begin fishing activity may travel in possession of and/or land Dungeness crab in

other areas of California because that vessel is not subject to California's fair start provision.

Q: NEW If my vessel is subject to fair start and a delayed area opens, can I transit in possession of and/or land Dungeness crab that was taken outside the delayed area?

A: No. A vessel subject to fair start that wants to transit and/or land in a delayed area that opens must wait for the 30-day clock to expire. For instance, if a vessel began fishing in Area A before Area B opened under a fair start delay, then that vessel would be subject to fair start and unable to transit, possess, or land in Area B until the 30-day waiting period has concluded.

FAIR START (Fishing Season Delays in Oregon or Washington)

Q: How does participating in Washington's Puget Sound Dungeness crab fishery affect the application of Fish and Game Code section 8279.1?

A: The Department does not consider Puget Sound to be an ocean water subject to fair start pursuant to Section 8279.1 of the Fish and Game Code. Therefore, a vessel participating in the Puget Sound fishery would not trigger the fair start provisions.

Q: If there are delayed areas in Washington due to either quality testing or domoic acid, how will California's fair start apply to this state?

A: A vessel that participated in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery prior to the opening of any delayed area in Washington is subject to fair start. The fair start provision treats every delayed area either due to Tri-State quality testing or a risk to human health (e.g. domoic acid) separately so a vessel subject to fair start must wait at least 30 days from the date of the opening of each delayed area before it can take, possess onboard, or land Dungeness crab in that delayed area. The geographic extent of any Tri-State quality delay in Washington will be determined based on the industry notice provided by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and would apply to **all areas** identified in the industry notice.

Q: How does the California fair start provision treat tribal delays in Washington?

A: Under section 8279.1 of the Fish and Game Code, a tribal fishing delay does not qualify as a delay in the start of the opening of the commercial Dungeness crab fishing season. Only a delay based on the Tri-State quality testing program or to prevent a human health risk would trigger the 30-day fair start period. However, if the state of Washington issues a Tri-State quality delay for their coastal Dungeness crab fishery that is for the entire state from the Oregon/Washington border to the U.S./Canada border, as identified in their industry notice, then coastal areas within Washington that are further subject to tribal agreements and eventually open to general fishing may require additional days before a vessel subject to California's fair start provision can participate in the fishery in this newly opened area. Those vessels may not participate for at least 30 days from when the coastal fishery first opened under the Tri-State quality delay.

For instance, if Washington delays their coastal fishery due to quality until December 31, then the fair start opening would be January 30 the following calendar year. A vessel subject to fair start that intends to fish in a tribal fishing area in Washington that opens to general fishing prior to this date would have to wait the full fair start period until January 30 before they begin fishing in that area. Vessels that are subject to Washington's fair start provision should refer to the industry notice provided by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for more information.

Q: If there are delayed areas in Oregon due to either quality testing or domoic acid, how will California's fair start apply to this state?

A: Similar to Washington, the fair start provision treats every area that is delayed due to Tri-State quality testing or a risk to human health (i.e. domoic acid) as separate delayed areas. When any delayed areas in Oregon open to fishing, a vessel that participated in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery prior to the opening of the delayed area in Oregon is subject to fair start and must wait 30 days from the date of the opening before it can take, possess onboard, or land Dungeness crab in the delayed area. In the Tri-State quality testing protocol, Oregon may consider multiple closure areas in their state depending on the results of quality testing.

Q: How does participating in the fishery south of Point Arena, California affect a vessel's ability to fish in Oregon and Washington if there are fair start delays in these respective states?

A: If a vessel intends to fish for commercial Dungeness crab in a delayed area subject to fair start in either Oregon or Washington, the vessel would be subject to California's fair start if they participated in the California fishery prior to the opening of the delayed area. This includes the area south of Point Arena, CA in what is considered California's Central Management Area (District 10 and south). The northern boundary of District 10 is at the Sonoma/Mendocino County line.

Q: How does participating in either Oregon or Washington affect a vessel's ability to fish in California's Central Management Area (south of Sonoma/Mendocino County line) if there are fair start delays in this area?

A: If a vessel intends to fish for commercial Dungeness crab in a delayed area subject to fair start in California's Central Management Area (District 10 and south), the vessel would be subject to California's fair start if they previously participated in the Oregon and/or coastal non-tribal Washington Dungeness crab fisheries.

QUALITY TESTING

Q: How does poor crab quality delay the opening of the Dungeness crab season?

A: [Fish and Game Code section 8276.2](#) describes the circumstances in which a season may be delayed due to poor crab quality in the region north of the Sonoma/Mendocino county line to the California/Oregon border (Districts 6, 7, 8, and 9; or northern management area). The Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee established a testing protocol that sets guidelines for the meat recovery criteria (24% with no rounding), timing of each round of testing, and locations for testing. All testing locations must reach the meat recovery criteria in order to open. Depending on the results after each round of testing, the Director will either open the fishery or continue to delay the season in 15-day increments until January 15, the latest a season can be delayed due to crab quality.

Q: How does the California fishing season open after a delay due to crab quality?

A: When the Director declares that the northern management area season can open after a delay for crab quality it will be preceded by a 64-hour gear setting period pursuant to [Fish and Game Code section 8283](#).

Q: How will Fish and Game Code section 8279.1 apply to areas that are delayed due to poor crab quality?

A: A delay due to poor crab quality postpones the opening of the entire northern management area and therefore triggers the fair start provision for the entire northern management area. A vessel that is subject to fair start because of a crab quality delay (i.e. participated in the fishery outside the northern management area) must wait 30 days after the northern management area opens before they can take, possess onboard, or land Dungeness crab in the area. For example, a vessel is subject to fair start if they participated in the fishery in the central management area (south of the Sonoma/Mendocino county line) prior to the quality delayed opening of the northern management area. See the Fair Start section of this FAQ.