

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

Working Group Discussion Date: December 20, 2022

Working Group Recommendation: Commercial Fishery

The Working Group had an extensive discussion regarding the current level of marine life entanglement risk and appropriate management action. Working Group members expressed mixed support for the two options identified in the [December 16, 2022 Preliminary Assessment and Management Recommendation](#), with no clear consensus recommendation or majority/minority position. As a whole, the Working Group acknowledged that both options would be protective of humpback whales, although a continued delay would provide stronger protections.

Working Group members who supported a December 31, 2022 opener under a 50% vertical line reduction and Fleet Advisory concurred with the analysis presented in the [December 16, 2022 Preliminary Assessment and Management Recommendation](#); that risk has declined to the point where some level of fishing activity should be allowed.

Working Group members who supported a continued delay noted that the areas within Fishing Zone 3 where humpback whales have continued to persist overlap with the primary fishing grounds of the Bodega Bay fleet. Even under a 50% vertical line reduction, they anticipate a substantial amount of gear would be deployed in that area. Some Working Group members also expressed support for a continued delay until risk has declined sufficiently to allow full deployment of permitted allotments, rather than the 50% proposed.

The Working Group discussed the potential implications for fair start if the quality delay for Fishing Zones 1-2 lifts to allow a December 31st opener. The Working Group also discussed the potential for a continued delay in Fishing Zone 3 and allowing Fishing Zones 4-6 to open on December 31st under a 50% vertical line reduction and Fleet Advisory, but no formal recommendation was advanced.

During the discussion several Working Group members also shared outcomes from port association and fishery sector (e.g., CPFV) meetings. Specifically, Half Moon Bay, San Francisco, Monterey Bay, and recreational representatives

support the December 31st opener, while Bodega Bay, CCCA, and San Luis Obispo/Morro Bay supported a continued delay.

Working Group Recommendation: Recreational Fishery

If the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 3-6 were subject to a vertical line reduction, some Working Group members supported a continuation of the trap restriction currently in place. This was due to the potential for a high number of additional lines to be deployed in the recreational sector, during a period where CDFW Marine Region staff have recommended the commercial fishery be subject to a 50% vertical line reduction. Since CDFW is not able to require reductions in trap usage in the recreational sector, a continuation of the trap restriction would be prudent. Recreational representatives clarified that the number of recreational trap validations sold is not a reliable indicator of anticipated trap effort in the recreational sector. This recommendation received limited support from the Working Group.