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Quality Testing Procedures Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following serves to address concerns about the pre-season quality test procedures.

Q: What is quality testing?

A: Quality testing is a procedure performed by approved processors to inform whether Dungeness crab are ready for harvest by certain time periods. If crab are soft shelled or do not have sufficient meat volume they are not suitable for harvest and result in Dungeness crab season delays.

Q: What area of the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery is subject to quality testing?

A: Under California's [Fish and Game Code section 8276.2](#), Dungeness crab quality pre-season tests are authorized to determine how the commercial Dungeness crab fishery will open for the entire region north of the Sonoma/Mendocino county line to the California/Oregon border (Districts 6, 7, 8, and 9; or northern management area).

Q: Where can I find the Dungeness crab quality test procedures?

A: The [Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee established a testing protocol](#) that sets guidelines for the meat recovery criteria by area, timing of each round of testing, and locations for testing. This testing protocol is approved under the Tri-State Coastal Dungeness crab Commercial Fishery Memorandum of Understanding between the states' Department of Fish and Wildlife of Washington, Oregon and California.

Q: What are the criteria for opening the northern management area of the fishery?

A: Each northern California testing location must reach the minimum meat recovery criteria of 24% (no rounding) by pre-established decision dates in order to open. After each round of testing, the Director will either open the fishery or continue to delay the season in 15-day increments. Once a testing location meets the minimum criteria they no longer need to be tested. If all three (3) testing locations meet the minimum criteria, the Director must open the fishery. The latest the northern management area can be delayed under quality testing is until January 15. The absence of test results by the decision date will also result in a delay of the fishery.

Q: Can the Director delay opening the fishery even if all areas pass the minimum criteria?

A: No, the director does not have discretion or authority to delay the fishery due to quality once testing locations have passed the minimum criteria.

Q: What are the pre-established decision dates and delay dates?

The pre-established decision dates for the 15-day delay increments were determined under the Tri-State testing protocol as follows:

1. November 22 for opening on December 1 or delay until December 16 via Director's memo.
2. December 7 for opening on December 16 or delay until December 31 via Director's memo.
3. December 22 for opening on December 31 or delay until January 15 via Director's memo.

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

A: If test results indicate no further delays are necessary, delayed opening dates will always be addressed by the preceding Director memo. When the Director declares that the northern management area can open, it will be preceded by a 64-hour gear setting period pursuant to [Fish and Game Code section 8283](#). For more information regarding the 2022-2023 commercial Dungeness crab season, please see CDFW's [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Q: Where are the testing locations for the quality test in California?

A: For each quality test round, Dungeness crab are collected from each of the three (3) testing locations of Crescent City, Trinidad, and Eureka. Each testing location is comprised of two (2) sample stations. The testing location of Crescent City is collected from St. George Reef and Klamath River, Trinidad is collected from Lagoons and Trinidad Head, and Eureka from LP Eureka and Eel River.

Q: What number of traps are placed at these locations?

A: At each test station, a vessel deploys 18 traps per sample station and 36 traps per test location. A string of six (6) traps are placed in 3 target depth strata of either 15, 25, and 35 fathoms or 15, 30, and 45 fathoms. The traps are soaked overnight and retrieved the next day, when all legal-sized male Dungeness crab are collected and stored in seawater on the vessel.

Q: What are the testing procedures for calculating meat recovery?

A: Dungeness crab are combined on the vessel from the two (2) sample stations of each testing location to determine the meat recovery. All crab are weighed together 30 minutes after being drained from seawater and this number is the **boat weight**. The crab are then prepared for cooking and processing. Picking of the crab meat will be completed within 24 hours. The crab meat is brined in a 90% solution, cleaned, rinsed, drained, pressed, drip tested and then weighed to obtain the **packed weight**. This packed weight is divided by the boat weight to determine the **meat recovery percentage** for each of the three (3) testing location of Crescent City, Trinidad, and Eureka.

Meat Recovery Percentage (%) = Packed Weight ÷ Boat Weight

Q: Who determines the testing locations and procedures?

A: Tri-State agencies in consultation with industry representatives that include both fishermen and processors determine testing procedures by consensus. Testing locations and stations are determined by each state agency in consultation with industry and provided in Appendices B-D of the testing protocol. If changes are required to the locations, California Department of Fish and Wildlife staff are required to provide a minimum of two weeks notification to the other state agencies.