

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: March 29, 2023

Working Group Discussion: Commercial Fishery (Fishing Zones 3-6)

The Working Group discussed multiple recommendations regarding management actions for the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 3-6 during their meeting, none of which received broad support. Their discussions centered around the following topics: acknowledgment of increasing levels of entanglement risk as Actionable Species return to the Fishing Grounds during March and April; exceedance of the 3-year rolling average Impact Score Calculation merits precautionary action by CDFW during the late season; given this, that CDFW's preliminary management recommendation of a 50% trap reduction by April 13, 2023 for Fishing Zones 3-6 is insufficiently protective of Actionable Species; and that CDFW should implement an early season closure in Fishing Zones 3-6 at some point during the month of April.

Working Group members who supported an April closure for Fishing Zones 3-6 relied upon the rationale provided in [CDFW's March 27, 2023 Initial Assessment](#), as well as input from Working Group Advisors during the call that humpback whales generally return to Fishing Zones 3-4 during March and April. Two options were discussed; closing Fishing Zones 3-6 on April 15, 2023, or closing Fishing Zones 3-6 on April 30, 2023, with an interim management action (either a vertical line reduction or depth constraint) to further reduce risk applied mid-way through the month of April. There was mixed support for both options.

An alternative option to continue the commercial Fleet Advisory in all Fishing Zones was also discussed. Working Group members who supported this status quo approach noted that gear deployment had already declined substantially from levels at the start of the season, that many fishery participants were voluntarily pulling their gear, and that Marine Life Concentration triggers had not been met. This option received some support from Working Group members, as well as select port associations.

Working Group Discussion: Commercial Fishery (Fishing Zones 1-2) and Recreational Fishery (Statewide)

There was broad support amongst the full Working Group for continuing the Fleet Advisories currently in place for the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 1-2

and the recreational fishery in Fishing Zones 1-6. Some Working Group members expressed concern about continued deployment of traps in the recreational fishery if management actions to limit deployment of commercial gear are implemented. However, recreational fishery representatives conveyed there is currently low effort in their sector, and CDFW clarified restricting the use of traps in the recreational sector can only take place following attainment of Marine Life Concentration triggers.