

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 6, 2023

There was broad support from the Working Group for Marine Region's preliminary management recommendation for a statewide commercial fishery season delay. It should be noted that while a few Working Group members shared their perspectives on recommendations, they did not provide support or opposition for any management recommendation provided by Marine Region or the Working Group. Those Working Group members conveyed that due to their geographic locations in Fishing Zones 3-5, the decision to recommend or oppose a recommendation should be made by those representing ports in Fishing Zones 1 and 2.

Working Group Recommendation: Recreational Fishery (Fishing Zone 1)

The Working Group did not provide broad support for the recommendation to lift the temporary recreational crab trap prohibition in Fishing Zone 1. The Working Group recommends the Department continue the temporary prohibition of recreational crab traps in Fishing Zone 1 until at least the next Risk Assessment. By prohibiting recreational crab traps in Fishing Zone 1, entanglement risk would be further reduced by decreasing the number of vertical lines that pose an entanglement risk to migrating whales. Furthermore, this recommendation would better align the commercial and recreational fishery management actions by prohibiting all crab traps. This recommendation received broad support from the Working Group.

Working Group Recommendation: Commercial Fishery (Fishing Zones 1 and 2)

The Working Group brought forth a recommendation to open the commercial fishery on December 16, 2023, in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 with no restrictions on fishing gear. The rationale was based on known whale migration patterns and Marine Life Concentrations being below the RAMP triggers, entanglement risk in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 is perceived to be low enough to allow the season to open in these Fishing Zones. This recommendation received limited support from the Working Group.