

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 19, 2023

There was limited support for Marine Region's preliminary management recommendation for a season opener in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 under a 50% Gear Reduction (trap reduction). The Working Group did have broad support for the other recommendations to continue the season delay for the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 3-6 and the crab trap prohibition in Fishing Zones 3 and 4 for the recreational fishery.

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

The Working Group brought forth a recommendation to open the commercial fishery on January 5, 2024 at 12:01am, in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 (pre-soak to begin on January 2, 2024 at 8:01am) with no restrictions on fishing gear. The key rationale included known whale migration patterns, Marine Life Concentrations being below the RAMP triggers, and overall economic impact to the commercial fleet. Entanglement risk in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 is perceived to be low enough to allow the season to open in these Fishing Zones with full tier allotment. This recommendation received broad support from the Working Group.

The Working Group also requests that if the Director implements a trap reduction, a decrease of less than 50% be considered to allow for more traps to be deployed, thereby reducing the economic impact to the fleet.