



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
DECLARATION OF GEAR REDUCTION
IN THE COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY AND LIFTING OF TEMPORARY CRAB
TRAP PROHIBITION IN THE RECREATIONAL CRAB FISHERY
DUE TO RISK OF MARINE LIFE ENTANGLEMENT**

Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(b) and California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 132.8 ("Section 132.8") and Section 29.80(c)(7) ("Section 29.80(c)"), I find and declare that:

I

On January 11, 2024, I evaluated entanglement risk for the commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries pursuant to Sections 132.8 and 29.80(c). I provided the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) and the Whale Safe Fisheries email listserv with notice of the risk assessment and all non-confidential data under consideration on January 8, 2024. Prior to this risk assessment and management response, Department staff reviewed all relevant information and consulted with the Working Group.

II

At this time, Marine Life Concentration data do not require a Management Action pursuant to Section 132.8(c). Available data can be found at the Department's [Whale Safe Fisheries website](#).

III

Entanglement triggers for humpback whales have been reached for the total annual Impact Score running three-year average. Pursuant to Section 132.8(c)(1)(C)(1), I must implement a protective Management Action in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

IV

Upon evaluation of the Management Considerations pursuant to Section 132.8(d), I have determined that the management action listed below protects humpback whales based on the best available science. Additional information on the relevant Management Considerations is provided in the attachment to this Declaration.

V

THEREFORE, under the authority granted by Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(b) and Sections 132.8 and 29.80(c) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, I am implementing the following Management Action:

1. Lift the Fishery Closure in Fishing Zones 3-6 and limit the use of crab traps in the commercial fishery to 50% of a permitted vessel's trap tier. Buoy tags issued pursuant to Fish and Game Code 8276.5 shall be reduced consistent with this Declaration and all unused buoy tags shall be onboard the permitted vessel, not attached to any traps or buoys, and made available for inspection by the Department upon request, pursuant to Section 132.8 (e)(3) Title 14, CCR. Vessels must have at least 50% of valid buoy tags for the current fishing season onboard and available for inspection by the Department at all times while operating under this Management Action. Vessels placing traps in a Fishing Zone open under a Gear Reduction will be limited to the 50% trap tier reduction even when fishing in other Fishing Zones (see Table 1 in the attachment below). Any Dungeness Crab vessel transiting or operating in Fishing Zones 3-6, regardless of where fishing occurs, is subject to the 50% reduction and must have at least 50% of the valid buoy tags for the current fishing season onboard, not attached to any traps or buoys, and available for inspection by the Department at all times. This action will be in effect beginning 12:01am on January 18, 2024, preceded by 64-hours with a gear setting period that will begin at 8:00am on January 15, 2024.
2. Lift the temporary recreational crab trap prohibition in Fishing Zones 3 and 4 and issue a Fleet Advisory. This action will be in effect at 8:00am on January 12, 2024. The current trap prohibition will remain in place until that time.
3. Continue the Fleet Advisory in Fishing Zones 1-6 for the commercial fishery.

This management action is in effect until modified. The next risk assessment is expected to occur on or before February 15, 2024.

Updates and material regarding future entanglement risk evaluations in the commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries will be made available on the [Department's Whale Safe Fisheries web page](#).


Charlton H. Bonham, Director

1/11/24 11:40am PST
Date/Time

ATTACHMENT TO DIRECTOR JANUARY 11, 2024, DECLARATION OF GEAR REDUCTION
IN THE COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY AND LIFTING OF TEMPORARY CRAB
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Information referenced in this Attachment is further described in the Final Assessment of Marine Life Entanglement Risk and Management Recommendation dated January 11, 2024, and the Available Data and Preliminary Assessment document dated January 8, 2024, located at the Department's [Whale Safe Fisheries website](#), which to the Department's knowledge represents the best available science informing this risk assessment.

These recommendations were based on confirmed entanglements for humpback whales and a leatherback sea turtle and the resulting Impact Scores and the need to reduce overall entanglement risk due to uncertainty regarding fishing effort in Fishing Zones 3-6. Trap allotments by Tier under the 50% Gear Reduction are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Trap allotment under a 50% Gear Reduction by Tier.

Tier	Maximum Trap Allotment under 50% Gear Reduction
Tier 1	250
Tier 2	225
Tier 3	200
Tier 4	175
Tier 5	150
Tier 6	125
Tier 7	88