

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 27, 2024

The Working Group discussed the Department's preliminary recommendation to close the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 3-6 on April 5th. Many members of the Working Group noted that they generally supported the recommended Management Actions but did not support the suggested implementation date. Overall, members highlighted the need for more time to safely retrieve all fishing gear to minimize future entanglements.

Upon further discussion, the Working Group showed no support and broad opposition for the Department's recommendation to implement a Depth Constraint in the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 1 and 2.

The Working Group showed limited support and broad opposition for the Department's recommendation for a Fishery Closure in the commercial fishery and a Crab Trap Prohibition for the recreational fishery in Fishing Zones 3, 4, and 5, specifically regarding the implementation date of April 5, 2024.

Working Group Recommendation #1: Commercial Fishery Season Closure in Fishing Zones 3-6 and Recreational Fishery Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zones 3-5

The Working Group provided a recommendation to close the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 3-6 and prohibit crab traps in the recreational fishery in Fishing Zones 3-5 on April 12th at 6pm. The Working Group expressed that a later implementation date would allow sufficient time to safely retrieve fishing gear while accounting for variable weather conditions and is consistent with prior seasons. **This recommendation received broad support and limited opposition.**

Working Group Recommendation #2: Commercial Fishery (Fleet Advisory in Fishing Zones 1 and 2)

The Working Group provided a recommendation to continue the Fleet Advisory for the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 1 and 2. The key rationale was declining fishing effort, a low running impact score (when not accounting for unidentified entanglements), and no Marine Life Concentrations triggers being met. The Working Group noted that Depth Constraints are a useful tool, however, felt it would be a more effective Management Action if utilized later in

the season. **This recommendation received broad support and limited opposition.**

Working Group Recommendation #3: Commercial Fishery Statewide Season Closure and Recreational Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zones 3-5

The Working Group provided a third recommendation to close the commercial fishery season statewide and implement a recreational crab trap prohibition in Fishing Zones 3-5 on April 15th. The key rationale was the high three-year rolling average Impact Score and elevated Marine Life Concentrations. Surveys observed a few humpback whale individuals inshore in the northern Fishing Zones, supporting a precautionary approach to mitigate risk considering historic entanglements and the high Impact Score. A Depth Constraint was not considered to be a sufficient Management Action in the Northern Management Area based on the presence of whales inshore and lack of additional data in the region. The Working Group also indicated that an implementation date of April 15th would allow the fleet to remove gear safely and effectively. **This recommendation received limited support and broad opposition.**