

Staff Summary for April 17-18, 2024

9C. Department Marine Region Report**Today's Item**Information Action

The Department will highlight items of note since the last Commission meeting.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)**Background**

A verbal report is expected for the Department Marine Region report, including:

- I. Annual recreational ocean salmon and Pacific halibut regulations, and automatic conformance to federal regulations.
- II. Public discussion of action taken by the director of the Department in the recreational Dungeness crab fishery to temporarily prohibit the use of crab traps between the Sonoma/Mendocino county line and Point Conception, Santa Barbara County (fishing zones 3, 4 and 5), and remain under a fleet advisory for all open fishing zones (1, 2 and 6), to protect marine life from entanglement risk (see news release in Exhibit 1).

A Department news release of interest is included as Exhibit 2.

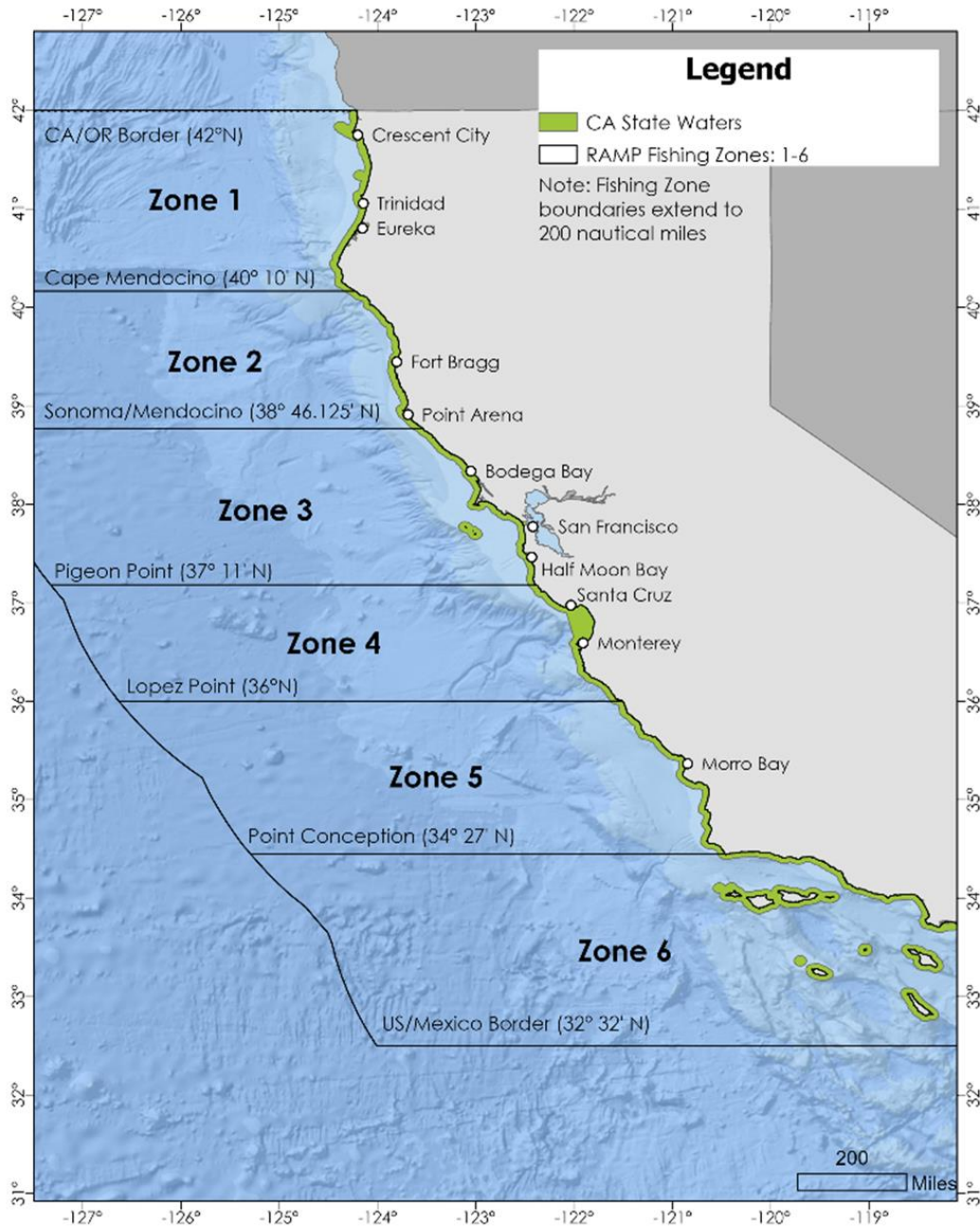
Significant Public Comments (N/A)**Recommendation (N/A)****Exhibits**

1. [Department news release: CDFW Closes Dungeness Crab Fishery and Restricts Recreational Crab Traps in the Central Management Area, Limits Commercial Fishing to Inside 30-Fathoms in Northern Management Area to Protect Whales from Entanglement, dated March 28, 2024](#)
2. [Department news release: Federal Funding Allocated for California 2023 Salmon Fishery Disaster; CDFW Seeks Public Input on Spending Plan, dated April 5, 2024](#)

Motion (N/A)

CDFW Closes Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery and Restricts Recreational Crab Traps in the Central Management Area, Limits Commercial Fishing to inside 30-Fathoms in Northern Management Area to Protect Whales from Entanglement

March 28, 2024



California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Director Charlton H. Bonham has assessed entanglement risk under the Risk Assessment Mitigation Program (RAMP) and [announced changes to both commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries](#). Aerial and vessel surveys conducted in mid-March show humpback whale numbers are increasing as they return

to forage off the coast of California, elevating entanglement risk. To minimize this risk for humpback whales, changes to the Dungeness crab fisheries, as detailed below, will be effective at 6:00 p.m. on April 8, 2024.

The commercial Dungeness crab fishery in Fishing Zones 3, 4, 5 and 6 (Sonoma/Mendocino county line to the U.S./Mexico border) will be closed, at which time the commercial take and possession of Dungeness crab from those waters is prohibited.

A 30-fathom depth constraint will be in effect for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 (Sonoma/Mendocino county line to the Oregon border). Traps used by the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 will be prohibited in waters seaward of the 30-fathom contour as defined in [Title 50 of the Federal Codes of Regulations, Part 660, Section 660.71](#). As a reminder all vessels must also carry onboard an [electronic monitoring system](#) capable of recording the vessel's location while engaged in fishing activity.

A recreational crab trap prohibition is being implemented in Fishing Zones 3, 4 and 5 (Sonoma/Mendocino county line to Point Conception). CDFW reminds recreational crabbers that take of Dungeness crab by other methods (including hoop nets and crab snares) is allowed through the close of the season.

All open Fishing Zones remain under a Fleet Advisory for both the commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries. In addition, CDFW reminds all fishery participants to implement best practices, as described in the [Best Practices Guide](#), and to anticipate additional management measures in the coming weeks.

Under [emergency regulations](#) approved in early March, CDFW has also authorized commercial Dungeness crab vessels to retrieve an unlimited number of commercial Dungeness crab traps which are lost, damaged, abandoned or otherwise derelict in Fishing Zones 3 through 6 starting at 6:00 a.m. on April 15, 2024. CDFW requests that individuals operating under the emergency regulations regularly report retrieved gear to WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov. Any vessel operating or transiting in an open Fishing Zone may not possess more than six traps belonging to another vessel, pursuant to Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Section 132.2(a)(2)(A).

CDFW anticipates the next risk assessment will take place in mid-April 2024. For more information related to the risk assessment process, please visit [CDFW's Whale Safe Fisheries page](#). For more information on the Dungeness crab fishery, please visit wildlife.ca.gov/crab.

Federal Funding Allocated for California 2023 Salmon Fishery Disaster; CDFW Seeks Public Input on Spending Plan

April 5, 2024



On April 6, 2023, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) acted unanimously to recommend a full closure of California’s 2023 commercial and recreational ocean salmon seasons due to extremely low population estimates for Sacramento and Klamath river fall Chinook salmon. Within hours of the recommendation, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced his administration’s [request for a federal fishery disaster declaration](#) to support impacted communities.

The [U. S. Secretary of Commerce approved this request](#) on Oct. 30, 2023, which began the process of providing federal assistance to communities and businesses impacted by the disaster. On Feb. 15, 2024, the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife \(CDFW\) was notified](#) that \$20,625,729 had been allocated by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration to respond to the disaster. Following the announcement of fund allocation, and with support and input from industry representatives, CDFW developed the draft 2023 Salmon Disaster Spend Plan to distribute these disaster funds.

CDFW invites the public to submit comments on the [draft 2023 Salmon Disaster Spend Plan](#). CDFW is asking for input on the proposed allocations of relief funding to fishing sectors, qualifying criteria, individual payouts and other components of the plan. Following the comment period, CDFW will finalize the plan for submission to the Department of Commerce.

Comments may be provided via email through 5 p.m., April 19, 2024, at SalmonDisaster@wildlife.ca.gov.

Looking ahead to the 2024 season, the PFMC will consider the alternatives for the 2024 salmon seasons at its meeting April 5-11 in Seattle. This meeting is open to the public. Although returns of Sacramento River fall Chinook salmon are higher than last year, they are still well below historic averages. The Newsom Administration stands ready to seek additional federal fishery disaster assistance should California's iconic salmon fisheries and fishing communities continue to be impacted into 2024.

More information about [federal fishery disaster relief](#) and [ocean salmon fishing seasons](#) is available on the CDFW website. More information about the PFMC and the public meeting on April 5-11 in Seattle is available on the [PFMC website](#).