

# 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 18, 2024**

The Working Group discussed the Department's preliminary recommendation in the commercial fishery for a Season Opener in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 with a 25% Gear Reduction and a Season Opener in Fishing Zones 3-6 with a 50% Gear Reduction. The Working Group decided to discuss the recommendations separately by Fishing Zones.

There was limited support and broad opposition for the Department's preliminary recommendation in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 for a Season Opener with a 25% Gear Reduction. There was broad support and limited opposition for the Department's preliminary recommendation in Fishing Zones 3-6 for a Season Opener with a 50% gear Reduction. There was broad support to implement a Fleet Advisory in all Fishing Zones.

The Working Group also separately discussed the Department's recommendation for the recreational fishery. There was broad support and limited opposition to lift the Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zones 3 and 4. There was broad support to implement a Fleet Advisory in all Fishing Zones.

The Working Group also brought forth three alternative recommendations for consideration.

### **Working Group Recommendation #1: Season Open in the Commercial Fishery for all Fishing Zones with no Gear Reduction in place.**

The Working Group provided a recommendation for a Season Opener in all Fishing Zones with no Gear Reduction in place with an implementation date of January 2, 2025. The key rationale was based on no Marine Life Concentration triggers being met in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 and low whale presence statewide. Working Group members stressed that there is little evidence that a Gear Reduction results in lower numbers of entanglements. This recommendation received limited opposition and some support.

### **Working Group Recommendation #2: Season Open in the Commercial Fishery for Fishing Zones 1 and 2 with no Gear Reduction in place.**

The Working Group provided a recommendation for a Season Opener in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 with no Gear Reduction in place and an implementation date of January 2, 2025. The key rationale was that Marine Life Concentration triggers have not been met, the season has already been delayed multiple times, and that there is no correlation between decreasing trap gear and decreasing entanglement numbers. This recommendation received broad support and limited opposition.

### Working Group Recommendation #3: Lift Crab Trap Prohibition in the Recreational Fishery in Fishing Zones 3 and 4

The Working Group provided a recommendation to lift the Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zones 3 and 4 with an implementation date of December 26, 2024. The key rationale was to invoke historical fishing practices afforded to the recreational fleet which allows recreational fleet members to start fishing earlier than the commercial fleet. This recommendation received limited opposition and limited support from the Working Group.