



**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 MARLINE 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 December 20, 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 December 16, 2024. Prior to this risk assessment and management response, Department staff reviewed all relevant information and consulted with the Working Group.

II

On December 9, 2024 aerial surveys undertaken by NOAA researchers observed 27 humpback whales and three blue whales in Fishing Zone 3 and 28 humpback whales in Fishing Zone 4 showing elevated but decreasing presence of humpback whales. Pursuant to 132.8(c)(2)(A) I must implement a Fishing Zone delay or other protective management action in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

III

NOAA-standardized data from commercial whale-watching trips in Fishing Zone 4 show continued presence of humpback whales, with the most recent weekly running average of 17.7 humpback whales in Monterey Bay. Pursuant to Section 132.8(c)(2)(A)(4)(a), I must implement a protective Management Action in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

IV

Impact Score Calculation exceeded a running average of two humpback whale entanglements over a three-year period. Pursuant to Section 132.8(c)(1)(C), I must implement a Fishing Zone closure or other protective Management Action.

V

There are no Department approved Marine Life Concentration survey data to inform the risk assessment in Fishing Zone 6. Pursuant to Section 29.80(c)(7)(A)(2) and Section 132.8(d), I must implement a protective Management Action.

VI

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

VII

**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 actions:

1. Lift the Fishery Closure in Fishing Zones 1-6 and limit the use of crab traps in Fishing Zone 1 and 2 to 75% of a permitted vessel's trap tier and limit the use of crab traps in Fishing Zones 3-6 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.

If conducting commercial fishing activities and or transiting within Fishing Zones 1-2 vessels must have at least 25% 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.

If conducting commercial fishing activities and or transiting within Fishing Zones 3-6 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 trap tier reduction even when fishing in other Fishing Zones. Any Dungeness Crab vessel transiting or operating in Fishing Zones 1-6, regardless

of where fishing occurs, is subject to the gear reduction and must have all extra 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 5, 2025 preceded by 64-hours with a gear setting period that will begin at 8:01am on January 2, 2025.

2. Lift the temporary recreational crab trap prohibition in Fishing Zones 3 and 4. This action will be in effect at 8:01 am on January 02, 2025. The current trap prohibition will remain in place until that time.
3. Continue the Fleet Advisory in Fishing Zones 1-6 for the commercial and recreational fisheries.

This management action is in effect until modified. The next risk assessment is expected to occur on or before January 15, 2025.

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

12/20/24 9:15AM PST  
Date/Time

ATTACHMENT TO DECEMBER 20, 2024 DIRECTOR 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

Information referenced in this Attachment is further described in the Final Assessment of Marine Life Entanglement Risk and Management Recommendation dated December 19, 2024 and the Available Data and Preliminary Assessment document dated December 16, 2024, and 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 elevated Marine Life Concentrations and an elevated impact score as a result of confirmed entanglements for humpback whales. Trap allotments by Tier under the Gear Reduction are listed below in Table 1.

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Maximum Trap Allotment under 25% Gear Reduction (Fishing Zones 1 and 2)</b>	<b>Maximum Trap Allotment under 50% Gear Reduction (Fishing Zones 3-6)</b>
Tier 1 (500)	375	250
Tier 2 (450)	338	225
Tier 3 (400)	300	200
Tier 4 (350)	263	175
Tier 5 (300)	225	150
Tier 6 (250)	188	125
Tier 7 (175)	132	88