



California Department of Fish and Wildlife Final Assessment of Marine Life Entanglement Risk and Management Recommendation for the Risk Assessment Mitigation Program

Date: February 13, 2025

An initial assessment and a preliminary recommendation were developed by California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Marine Region for consideration by the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) for the Risk Assessment Mitigation Program (RAMP; Section 132.8, Title 14, California Code of Regulations) regarding Management Actions to address marine life entanglement risk in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery as well as Section 29.80, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (Gear Restrictions for Recreational Take of Saltwater Crustaceans). The initial assessment was shared with the Working Group on February 10, 2025, and discussed at the conclusion of the Working Group meeting which was held on February 11, 2025. After reviewing all available data and input from the Working Group, Marine Region has prepared a final recommendation. For a map of the RAMP Fishing Zones, see the [Whale Safe Fisheries webpage](#).

I. Recommended Management Actions

Commercial Fishery:

- Fishing Zones 1 and 2: Continue 25% Gear Reduction
- Fishing Zones 3-6: Continue 50% Gear Reduction
- All Fishing Zones: Continue Fleet Advisory

Recreational Fishery:

- All Fishing Zones: Continue Fleet Advisory

II. Management Recommendation Summary Rationale

The Marine Region's final recommendation is for the Director to continue the 25% Gear Reduction in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 and the 50% Gear Reduction in Fishing Zones 3, 4, 5 and 6. The Fleet Advisory would also continue in all Fishing Zones.

The Marine Region also recommends a continuation of the Fleet Advisory for all Fishing Zones (1-6) for the recreational fishery.

These recommendations are supported by the high number of entanglements that occurred during the 2024 calendar year and 3-year average Impact Score for the commercial fishery. The elevated number of entanglements supports the recommendations to continue the Vertical Line/Gear Reduction Management Actions to minimize the number of vertical lines/traps for the commercial fishery. Reducing the number of traps used in each Fishing Zone should reduce the likelihood of lost or abandoned gear throughout the season. Marine Life Concentrations are expected to increase in the coming weeks as whales begin to return from their winter breeding grounds. Precautionary Management Actions should therefore remain employed to reduce entanglement risk, which includes the current 50% Gear Reduction in Fishing Zones 3-6 and 25% Gear Reduction in Fishing Zones 1 and 2. Gear Reductions across all Fishing Zones will reduce the number of vertical lines, thereby reducing the likelihood of entanglement risk as whales return to forage off California.

Entanglements: Numerous humpback whale entanglements have been reported since the close of the 2023-24 fishing season. The [RAMP Entanglement History](#) document describes confirmed Actionable Species entanglements that have been reported by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as of February 11, 2025. Humpback whale entanglements in California commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear and Unknown Fishing Gear bring the three-year rolling average Impact Score to 3.9 (subject to revision), which exceeds the trigger as defined in RAMP of two entanglements, requiring Management Action to reduce entanglement risk in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

All Management Actions will be re-evaluated at the next Risk Assessment, which is expected to occur on or around March 18, 2025. For additional details, see the Entanglement and Marine Life Concentration sections of the [Available Data document](#).

III. Alternatives Considered but Rejected

- Season Delay – Fishing Season has already started in all Fishing Zones, so not considered as a Management Action.
- Depth Restriction – given the seasonal whale migration patterns, this Management Action is not recommended.
- Alternative Gear - can only be authorized after April 1st.