



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

Date: March 17, 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 March 12, 2025, and discussed at the conclusion of the Working Group meeting which was held on March 14, 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, along with the Fleet Advisory 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 running average Impact Score for the commercial fishery. Based on historical migration patterns Marine Life Concentrations are expected to increase in the coming weeks as

whales begin to return from their winter breeding grounds. Therefore, precautionary Management Actions should remain in place 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. Maintaining the current Management Actions are also supported by oceanographic data which indicates medium to low habitat compression. This will likely provide a broad distribution of foraging opportunities as whales return. Additionally, bi-weekly reports show reduced fishing effort across all Fishing Zones in recent weeks with 46 of the 296 reporting vessels ending the season as of the March 1 reporting period. Those same bi-weekly reports show a reduction of deployed traps from a peak of 67,681 traps during the February 1 reporting period to 59,039 traps from the March 1 period. The next reporting period will reflect the end-of-season reports noted above, showing additional trap reductions. Therefore, a continuation of existing Management Actions will provide continued fishing opportunities while balancing the need to reduce risk of entanglement as whales begin their return to California waters. These measures will again be re-evaluated at the next risk assessment in late March.

Entanglements: No new entanglements have been reported since the last Risk Assessment and no entanglements have been reported in California for the current calendar year. The [RAMP Entanglement History](#) document describes confirmed Actionable Species entanglements that have been reported by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as of March 14, 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 28, 2025. For additional details, see the Entanglement and Marine Life Concentration sections of the [Available Data document](#).

Table 1. Fishing Zones and current management status for the California commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries.

Fishing Zone	Commercial Fishery: Current Management Status	Commercial Fishery: Proposed Management Status	Recreational Fishery: Current Management Status	Recreational Fishery: Proposed Management Status
1	25% Gear Reduction	25% Gear Reduction	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
2	25% Gear Reduction	25% Gear Reduction	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
3	50% Gear Reduction	50% Gear Reduction	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
4	50% Gear Reduction	50% Gear Reduction	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
5	50% Gear Reduction	50% Gear Reduction	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
6	50% Gear Reduction	50% Gear Reduction	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory

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 – due to the limited number of whale observations at this time, this Management Action is not recommended.
- Alternative Gear - can only be authorized after April 1st.