



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

Date: April 3, 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 28, 2025, and discussed at the conclusion of the Working Group meeting which was held on April 2, 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 1-2: Continue 25% Gear Reduction and implement a 30-fathom Depth Constraint, effective April 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
- Fishing Zone 3: Continue 50% Gear Reduction and implement a 30-fathom Depth Constraint, effective April 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
- Fishing Zones 4-6: Season Closure, effective April 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Recreational Fishery:

- Fishing Zone 4: Crab Trap Restriction, effective April 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
- All Fishing Zones: 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 1-2 and implement a 30-fathom Depth Constraint. Marine Region recommends the continuation of the 50% Gear Reduction and the implementation of a 30-fathom Depth Constraint in Fishing Zone 3 and a Season Closure for the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 4-6. The 30-fathom Depth Constraint and Season Closure would be effective April 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

The Marine Region also recommends a crab trap restriction for the recreational

fishery in Fishing Zone 4, effective April 15, 2025, at 6:00 pm. A Fleet Advisory would be maintained for all Fishing Zones for both the commercial and recreational fisheries.

These recommendations are based on increasing Marine Life Concentrations in Fishing Zones 3 and 4, the Entanglement Impact Score for the entire commercial fishery, and current fleet dynamics based on bi-weekly reports. Humpback whale observations are increasing and based on historical migration patterns, additional Management Actions must be applied because humpbacks are now arriving from their winter breeding grounds. In addition, the current Impact Score is 3.9, which exceeds the rolling average in RAMP, requiring action by the CDFW Director. The [Habitat Compression Index](#) shows moderate habitat compression in Fishing Zones 1-4, indicating a broader distribution of available forage, and thereby supporting a Depth Constraint and Gear Reduction to allow for continued fishing opportunities in Fishing Zone 1-3 while balancing entanglement risk. Based on bi-weekly reporting, current fishing effort in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 is occurring between 15 and 37 fathoms, with an average max depth of 37 fathoms. Similarly, fishing effort in Fishing Zone 3 is occurring between 22-40 fathoms with a max average depth of 40 fathoms (see Table 8 of [March 28, 2025 Available Data document](#)). By implementing a 30-fathom Depth Constraint, the remaining fishing effort in deeper waters will be moved to shallower depths to reduce co-occurrence of whales and vertical lines as whales migrate northward. Marine Life Concentration triggers were exceeded in Fishing Zone 4, so a trap restriction for the recreational fishery is also recommended. Management Actions for Fishing Zones 1, 2 and 3 for the commercial fishery will be re-evaluated at the next risk assessment in mid-April.

The Department anticipates further Management Actions, including Fishery Closures to be implemented at the next Risk Assessment as whale concentrations increase in state waters. The fleet should anticipate they will be required to remove fishing gear quickly once additional Management Actions are announced. Recreational Management Actions will also be re-evaluated for Fishing Zones 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6.

Entanglements: A confirmed entanglement of a humpback whale was reported on March 22, 2025, in Monterey Bay, CA. This is a resight of a whale that was previously observed in October 2024 entangled with CA commercial Dungeness crab gear. More information regarding the entanglement and response effort can be found on page 4 of the [March 28, 2025 Available Data & Preliminary Assessment document](#).

Marine Life Concentrations: Based on CDFW aerial surveys, humpback whale sightings are beginning to increase in Fishing Zones 3 and 4 as whales begin their migration north from winter breeding areas. Sightings are expected to increase through the spring months based on historical migration patterns. Humpback whales were predominantly observed in depths of 100-200 m in the

Monterey Bay area.

For additional details, see the Entanglement and Marine Life Concentration sections of the [Available Data & Preliminary Assessment document](#).

Table 1. Fishing Zones and current management status in the California commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fishery.

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 and 30-Fathom Depth Constraint	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
2	25% Gear Reduction	25% Gear Reduction and 30-Fathom Depth Constraint	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
3	50% Gear Reduction	50% Gear Reduction and 30-Fathom Depth Constraint	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
4	50% Gear Reduction	Season Closure	Fleet Advisory	Crab Trap Prohibition
5	50% Gear Reduction	Season Closure	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory
6	50% Gear Reduction	Season Closure	Fleet Advisory	Fleet Advisory

III. Alternatives Considered but Rejected

- Alternative Gear- can be authorized after April 1st, but no gear currently is authorized for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.