

# 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: April 2, 2025**

The Working Group discussed the Department's preliminary recommendation for the commercial and recreational fisheries. For the commercial fishery, the Department recommends continuing a 25% Gear Reduction and implementing a 30-Fathom Depth Constraint in Fishing Zones 1 and 2, a Season Closure in Fishing Zones 3-6, and a continuation of the Fleet Advisory in Fishing Zones 1-6. The recommendation for the recreational fishery is a Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zone 4 and continuation of the Fleet Advisory in Fishing Zones 1-6. The Working Group provided limited support and moderate opposition for the Department's recommendation. The Working Group provided three alternative recommendations for consideration by the CDFW Director.

## **Working Group Recommendation #1: Remove current 25% Gear Reduction and proposed 30-fathom Depth Constraint in the Commercial Fishery for Fishing Zones 1 and 2**

The Working Group provided a recommendation to remove the 25% Gear Reduction and recommended against the implementation of a 30-fathom Depth Constraint in Fishing Zones 1 and 2, effective immediately. The key rationale was that there is no science to support gear reductions and/or depth constraints provide risk reduction when there is no co-occurrence of whales and fishing gear. The Working Group also indicated gear reductions already occurring as boats "stack out" for the season in these Fishing Zones. This recommendation received moderate support and limited opposition.

## **Working Group Recommendation #2: Continue 50% Gear Reduction for the Commercial Fishery in Fishing Zone 3, implement a 30-fathom Depth Constraint on April 15, 2025, and issue a pre-determined Season Closure of April 30, 2025. For the Recreational Fishery, implement a Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zones 3 and 4, effective April 15, 2025**

The Working Group provided a recommendation for the commercial fishery in Fishing Zone 3 to continue the 50% Gear Reduction, implement a 30-fathom Depth Constraint on April 15, 2025, and set a pre-determined Season Closure date of April 30, 2025. The recommendation also included a Crab Trap

Prohibition for the recreational fishery in Fishing Zones 3 and 4 effective April 15, 2025.

The key rationale for this recommendation was that these actions reduce entanglement risk while still providing fishing opportunities and limiting economic impacts on the fleet. The Working Group noted that Marine Life Concentration triggers have not been met in Fishing Zone 3. Fishing effort is decreasing, as shown in bi-weekly reports, and there has been a reported reduction in the abundance of krill. In addition, the Working Group noted that the Habitat Compression indices are low to moderate in the affected Fishing Zones. Lastly, a later Season Closure date and Depth Restriction would allow the fleet more time to remove fishing gear. This recommendation received broad support and moderate opposition.

**Working Group Recommendation #3:** No recreational Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zone 4 and remain open for all Fishing Zones until April 30, 2025

The Working Group provided a recommendation that opposed the Department's suggested Crab Trap Prohibition in the recreational fishery in Fishing Zone 4. The Working Group instead recommended that the recreational fishery remain open in all Fishing Zones until April 30, 2025. The justification for this recommendation was that the recreational fishery represents 1% of active fishing gear and that there is currently low fishing effort due to poor weather. Additional rationale included that there is a limited historical record of marine life entanglements in recreational fishing gear. This recommendation received limited support and limited opposition.