



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

Date: June 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 June 10, 2025, and discussed at the conclusion of the Working Group meeting which was held on June 12, 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: Season Closure, effective June 20, 2025, at 6:00pm
- Fishing Zones 3-6: Season Closed

Recreational Fishery:

- Fishing Zones 3-4: Continue Crab Trap Prohibition
- All Fishing Zones: Fleet Advisory

II. Management Recommendation Summary Rationale

The Marine Region's recommendation is for the Director to implement a Season Closure for the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 1 and 2, effective June 20, 2025, at 6:00pm.

Fishing Zones 3-6 are closed for the remainder of the 2024-25 commercial fishing season. A Crab Trap Prohibition remains in place for Fishing Zones 3-4 in the recreational fishery and a Fleet Advisory remains for all Fishing Zones through the close of the season.

These recommendations are based on the Entanglement Impact Score for the entire commercial fishery and historical migration patterns of humpback whales. The current entanglement Impact Score is 4.40, which exceeds the rolling average in RAMP. On June 7, 2025, a confirmed entanglement of a

juvenile humpback whale with two different sets of CA commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear was reported in Humboldt County. This recent entanglement in Fishing Zone 1 further increases the Impact Score and necessitates a Season Closure in the Northern Management Area (Fishing Zones 1-2). The current Depth Constraint and Gear Reduction have not sufficiently reduced entanglement risk in these Fishing Zones; therefore, additional protective measures must be implemented.

Entanglements: On June 7, 2025, CDFW Law Enforcement Division (LED) officers observed a juvenile humpback whale with several wraps of crab line around its tail. Photographs confirmed the fishing gear involved did have a CA Dungeness Crab buoy tag attached. There was one set of crab buoys immediately near the tail and another being dragged and submerged approximately 50 yards behind the whale. Two different sets of crab gear appeared to be involved. CDFW is currently working with NMFS staff to review documentation and contact the owners of the fishing gear.

III. Alternatives Considered but Rejected

- Continue the 30-fathom Depth Constraint and 25% Gear Reduction in Fishing Zones 1-2. Given the recent entanglement in CA Dungeness crab fishing gear in Fishing Zone 1, this alternative was rejected.
- Implementing additional Gear Reductions would not provide meaningful fishing opportunities this late in the season, nor would it align well with the pending statutory closure of July 15, so this alternative was also rejected.
- Alternative Gear- can be authorized after April 1st, but no gear currently is authorized for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.