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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
DECLARATION OF GEAR REDUCTION IN THE COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY
AND LIFTING OF TEMPORARY CRAB TRAP PROHIBITION IN THE RECREATIONAL CRAB
FISHERY DUE TO RISK OF MARINE LIFE ENTANGLEMENT

Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(b) and California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 132.8 ("Section 132.8") and Section 29.80(c)(7) ("Section 29.80(c)"), I find and declare that:

I

On December 19, 2025, I evaluated entanglement risk for the commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries pursuant to Sections 132.8 and 29.80(c). I provided the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) and the Whale Safe Fisheries email listserv with notice of the risk assessment and all non-confidential data under consideration on December 15, 2025. Prior to this risk assessment and management response, Department staff reviewed all relevant information and consulted with the Working Group.

II

On December 9, 2025, aerial surveys undertaken by CDFW staff observed 21 humpback whales in Fishing Zone 3. On December 11, 2025, aerial surveys undertaken by CDFW staff observed 34 humpback whales in Fishing Zone 3. Pursuant to 132.8(c)(2)(A)(4), I must implement a Fishing Zone delay or other protective management action in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

III

Standardized data from commercial whale-watching trips in Fishing Zone 4 show continued presence of humpback whales, with the most recent weekly running average of 7.9 humpback whales in Monterey Bay. Pursuant to Section 132.8(c)(2)(A)(4)(a), I must implement a protective Management Action in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

IV

Upon evaluation of the management considerations pursuant to Section 132.8(d), I have determined that the management action listed below protects humpback whales based on the best available science. Additional information on the relevant management considerations is provided in the attachment to this declaration.

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V

THEREFORE, under the authority granted by Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(b) and Sections 132.8 and 29.80(c) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, I am implementing the following management actions:

1. Lift the Fishery Closure in Fishing Zones 1-5 and limit the use of crab traps in Fishing Zone 1 and 2 to 85% of a permitted vessel's trap tier and limit the use of crab traps in Fishing Zones 3-5 to 60% of a permitted vessel's trap tier. Buoy tags issued pursuant to Fish and Game Code 8276.5 shall be reduced consistent with this Declaration and all unused buoy tags shall be onboard the permitted vessel, not attached to any traps or buoys, and made available for inspection by the Department upon request, pursuant to Section 132.8 (e)(2) Title 14, CCR.

If conducting commercial fishing activities and/or transiting within Fishing Zones 1-2 vessels must have at least 15% of valid buoy tags for the current fishing season onboard and available for inspection by the Department at all times while operating under this Management Action.

If conducting commercial fishing activities and/or transiting within Fishing Zones 3-5 vessels must have at least 40% of valid buoy tags for the current fishing season onboard and available for inspection by the Department at all times while operating under this Management Action.

Vessels placing traps in a Fishing Zone open under a Gear Reduction will be limited to the trap tier reduction even when fishing in other Fishing Zones. Any Dungeness Crab vessel transiting or operating in Fishing Zones 1-5, regardless of where fishing occurs, is subject to the most restrictive zone transited and must have all extra buoy tags for the current fishing season onboard, not attached to any traps or buoys, and available for inspection by the Department at all times.

For Fishing Zones 1-2, this action will be in effect beginning 12:01am on January 15, 2026, preceded by 64-hours with a gear setting period that will begin at 8:01am on January 12, 2026, pending quality testing requirements being met. For Fishing Zones 3-5, this action will be in effect beginning 12:01am on January 5, 2026, preceded by 64-hours with a gear setting period that will begin at 8:01am on January 2, 2026.

2. Lift the temporary recreational crab trap prohibition in Fishing Zones 1, 3 and 4. This action will be in effect at 8:01 am on January 2, 2026. The current trap prohibition will remain in place until that time.

This management action is in effect until modified. The next risk assessment is expected to occur on or around January 16, 2026.

Updates and material regarding future entanglement risk evaluations in the commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries will be made available on the [Department's Whale Safe Fisheries web page](#).



Charlton H. Bonham, Director

12/19/25 10:30 am

Date/Time

ATTACHMENT TO DECEMBER 19, 2025 DIRECTOR DECLARATION OF GEAR REDUCTION
IN THE COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY AND LIFTING OF TEMPORARY CRAB
TRAP PROHIBITION IN THE RECREATIONAL CRAB FISHERY DUE TO RISK OF MARINE LIFE
ENTANGLEMENT

Information referenced in this Attachment is further described in the Final Assessment of Marine Life Entanglement Risk and Management Recommendation dated December 19, 2025 and the Available Data and Preliminary Assessment document dated December 15, 2025, and located at the Department's [Whale Safe Fisheries website](#), which to the Department's knowledge represents the best available science informing this risk assessment.

These recommendations represent a precautionary approach to address the exceedance of Marine Life Concentration data triggers in Fishing Zones 3 and 4 and to minimize the potential for entanglement. This is important because groups of humpback whales were recently observed in areas that overlap the commercial fishing grounds, particularly in Fishing Zone 3. Input received by the Working Group on December 17, 2025, informed the final recommendations as well. Surveys and known migration patterns for humpback whales indicate that whales are leaving California waters for their winter breeding grounds. Marine Region anticipates the whales will have migrated out of the fishing grounds by the proposed season opener dates, thereby further reducing entanglement risk.

Tier	Maximum Trap Allotment under 15% Gear Reduction (Fishing Zones 1 and 2)	Maximum Trap Allotment under 40% Gear Reduction (Fishing Zones 3-6)
Tier 1 (500)	425	300
Tier 2 (450)	383	270
Tier 3 (400)	340	240
Tier 4 (350)	298	210
Tier 5 (300)	255	180
Tier 6 (250)	213	150
Tier 7 (175)	149	105