

## Staff Summary for February 11-12, 2026

**13C. Department Marine Region****Today's Item****Information** ☒**Action** ☐

Receive updates on items of note since the previous Commission meeting.

- I. Update on actions taken by the Department director to lift the closure of the recreational Dungeness crab fishery due to public health hazard from domoic acid in waters from the southern boundary of the Reading Rock marine protected areas (41° 17.6' N. latitude) to Cape Mendocino (40° 10.0' N. latitude).

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)****Background**

The Department's Marine Region is expected to provide verbal updates, including actions taken by the Department director related to recreational Dungeness crab fisheries under authority of California Fish and Game Code Section 5523 and subsection 29.80(c) of Title 14, California Code of Regulations (exhibits 1-3). The Department's Marine Region will additionally provide verbal updates on the commercial Dungeness crab fishery (exhibits 1 -5).

Today is the opportunity to discuss recent actions taken in the recreational Dungeness crab fishery to: (1) open the recreational Dungeness crab fishery in all state waters after delays in some areas due to a public health hazard from domoic acid, and (2) the lifting of temporarily prohibitions of recreational crab traps based on the decreased presence of humpback whales and risk of entanglement.

**Significant Public Comments (N/A)****Recommendation (N/A)****Exhibits**

1. Department news release: ["Recreational Dungeness Crab Fishery Opens in Del Norte, Mendocino and Parts of Humboldt Counties After Delay Due to Public Health Risks,"](#) dated December 12, 2025
2. Department news release: ["Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery to Open January 5 in Central California; Recreational Crab Trap Restrictions Lifting Jan. 2,"](#) dated December 19, 2025
3. Department news release: ["Recreational Dungeness Crab Fishery to Open in Last Closed Area of Humboldt County After Delay Due to Public Health Risks,"](#) dated December 30, 2025
4. Department news release: ["Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery to Open in Portions of Northern California, One Area Further Delayed Due to Public Health Hazard,"](#) dated January 8, 2026
5. Department news release: ["Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery to Open in Humboldt County,"](#) dated January 23, 2026

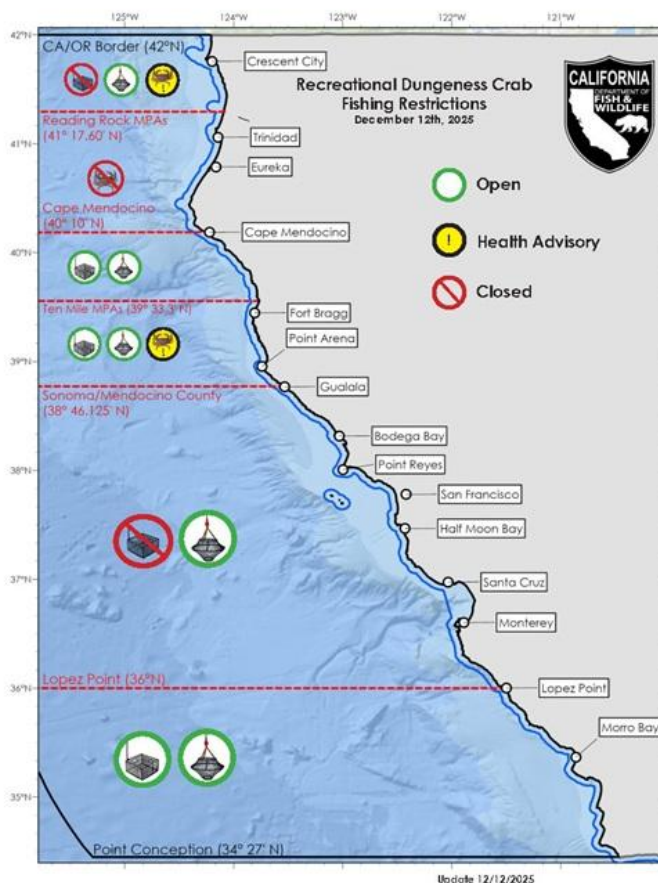
**Motion (N/A)**



# CDFW NEWS

December 12, 2025

## Recreational Dungeness Crab Fishery Opens in Del Norte, Mendocino, and Parts of Humboldt Counties After Delay Due to Public Health Risks



After a delay to the season opener due to elevated levels of domoic acid, the recreational Dungeness crab fishery opened today in Del Norte and Mendocino counties and part of Humboldt County, though trap restrictions remain in place due to elevated entanglement risk.

State health agencies determined that Dungeness crab in waters from the California/Oregon border (42° 0.0' N. latitude) to the southern boundary of the Reading Rock Marine Protected Areas (41° 17.6' N latitude) and from Cape Mendocino (40° 10.0' N. latitude) to the Sonoma/Mendocino County line (38° 46.125' N. latitude) can open with some areas under a health advisory issued by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Under a health advisory, the CDPH recommends to not eat crab viscera (also known as guts) and to clean crab prior to cooking.

Following the [recommendation](#) from state health agencies, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Director Charlton H. Bonham [declared](#) the recreational Dungeness crab fishery open in Del Norte County, Mendocino County, and parts of Humboldt County. The remaining area within Humboldt County continues to be closed due to elevated levels of domoic acid.

Testing of Dungeness crab will continue to determine when the fishery can safely reopen. Domoic acid testing is a coordinated effort between fishery participants, CDPH and CDFW.

Based on the last whale and sea turtle entanglement risk assessment, Director Bonham [declared a trap restriction in the northernmost part of the state](#). Therefore, only hoop nets or crab snares may be used in this area (California/Oregon border to the southern boundary of the Reading Rock Marine Protected Areas). Anglers may use crab traps from Cape Mendocino to the Sonoma/Mendocino County line. A crab trap restriction also remains in effect from the Sonoma/Mendocino County line to Lopez Point, in addition to a Fleet Advisory in all areas.

The commercial Dungeness crab season remains delayed due to entanglement risk, elevated levels of domoic acid and crab quality testing. Entanglement risk will be reevaluated next week to inform a possible opening of the commercial fishery around the New Year and possible lifting of the recreational trap restrictions.

For more information related to the risk assessment process, please visit [CDFW's Whale Safe Fisheries page](#). For more information on the Dungeness crab fishery, please visit [wildlife.ca.gov/crab](http://wildlife.ca.gov/crab). For the latest information on domoic acid, health advisories and season closures, please see the following:

**CDFW:**

- [Fishery closure information and health advisories page](#)
- **Domoic Acid Fishery Closure Information Line:** (831) 649-2883

**CDPH:**

- [Domoic Acid results website](#) (subsection Analytical Data – Crabs)
- [Shellfish advisories web page](#) for latest consumption warnings
- **Biotoxin information Line:** (510) 412-4643 or (800) 553-4133

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# CDFW NEWS

*December 19, 2025*

## **Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery to Open January 5 in Central California; Recreational Crab Trap Restrictions Lifting Jan. 2**



### ***Northern Commercial Fishery to Remain Closed Until at Least January 15 Due to Crab Quality Testing and Domoic Acid***

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will open the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the Central Management Area (Sonoma/Mendocino County line (38°46.125' N. latitude) to Point Conception (34°27' N. latitude)) beginning January 5, 2026, at 12:01 a.m., with pre-soak to begin on January 2, 2026, at 8:01 a.m. This area (Fishing Zones 3, 4 and 5) will be subject to a 40% trap reduction. The trap reduction is expected to reduce entanglement

risk for humpback whales by decreasing the number of vertical lines attached to traps in the water.

The Dungeness crab season in the Northern Management Area (Fishing Zones 1 and 2, California/Oregon border (42° N. latitude) to the Sonoma/Mendocino County line) will be further delayed pursuant to [Fish and Game Code Section 8276.2](#) because of the inability to conduct meat quality testing due to elevated levels of domoic acid. Pending results of ongoing domoic acid testing, the season will open on Jan. 15, 2026, at 12:01 a.m., under a 15% trap reduction in both Fishing Zones. A pre-soak period will begin on January 12, 2026, at 8:01 a.m. The crab quality delay triggers the [fair start provision](#) under Fish and Game Code Section 8279.1. Under fair start a vessel is prohibited from taking, possessing onboard or landing crab in an area previously delayed for a period of 30 days from the date of the opening if that vessel previously participated in other commercial Dungeness crab fishing areas (including those in Oregon and Washington) during the same season.

Opening the commercial crab fishing season under a trap reduction strikes a balance between the needs of the commercial fishery and the protection of humpback whales which remain in areas that overlap with key fishing areas off the California coast.

“Setting the opening date of the Dungeness crab fishery is never easy. The commercial Dungeness crab fishery is inherently complex, and careful consideration is required to ensure we are supporting California’s fishing communities while also reducing risk of entanglement of whales and sea turtles off our coast,” said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham. “CDFW is grateful for the collaborative effort between commercial and recreational fishermen, environmental groups, scientists and agency partners that support our work in managing this iconic West Coast fishery.”

“The commercial fishing fleet has always been both a producer of sustainable seafood that feeds our communities and coastal economies, and a steward of the ocean we depend on for our lives and livelihoods. Hard work and sacrifices by the fleet have reduced entanglements even as whale populations have grown, and we appreciate CDFW for recognizing that progress and responding by opening the season with additional opportunity,” said Lisa Damrosch, Executive Director Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations. “This opening reflects a careful balance and shows what is possible through shared effort to thread the needle within the system we are operating under. We also want to thank the Director for his leadership and many years of service at CDFW and wish him success in his next role.”

Any commercial Dungeness crab vessel fishing in or transiting Fishing Zones, regardless of fishing location, is subject to the 15% or 40% trap reduction based on the area transited. Commercial Dungeness crab vessels operating in all Fishing Zones are expected to comply with the restrictions detailed in the [Director’s Declaration](#) that includes additional information about this gear reduction.

CDFW is also lifting the temporary recreational crab trap restriction beginning January 2, 2026, at 8:01 a.m., between the California/Oregon border and Cape Mendocino (40°10' N. latitude) and between the Sonoma/Mendocino County line and Lopez Point, Monterey County (36° N. latitude) (Fishing Zones 1, 3 and 4).

CDFW encourages both the commercial and recreational crab fisheries to implement best fishing practices, as described in the [Best Practices Guide](#), and avoid setting any fishing gear in areas where whales or sea turtles are present. In addition, the commercial fishery is encouraged to remain vigilant for lost or abandoned gear throughout the fishing season. Permitted commercial Dungeness crab vessels are allowed to retrieve up to six derelict commercial Dungeness crab traps per fishing trip pursuant to Section 132.2, Title 14, of the California Code of Regulations. Derelict fishing gear may also be reported through [CalTIP](#).

For the latest information on domoic acid, health advisories and season closures please see the following:

**CDFW:**

- [Fishery closure information and health advisories](#) website
- Domoic Acid Fishery Closure Information Line: (831) 649-2883

**CDPH:**

- [Shellfish advisories page](#) for latest consumption warnings
- Biotoxin information line: (510) 412-4643 or (800) 553-4133

CDFW anticipates the next risk assessment will take place in mid-January 2026. For more information related to the risk assessment process, please visit [CDFW's Whale Safe Fisheries page](#). For more information on the Dungeness crab fishery, visit [www.wildlife.ca.gov/crab](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/crab). see [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information about the commercial fishery .

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# CDFW NEWS

*December 30, 2025*

## Recreational Dungeness Crab Fishery to Open in Last Closed Area of Humboldt County After Delay Due to Public Health Risks



The last area of the recreational Dungeness crab fishery in Humboldt County opened today after being delayed due to elevated levels of domoic acid.

State health agencies determined that Dungeness crab in waters from the southern boundary of the Reading Rock Marine Protected Areas (41° 17.6' N. latitude) to Cape Mendocino (40° 10.0' N. latitude) can open. While the area is open to fishing, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued a health advisory to not eat crab viscera (also known as guts) and to clean crab prior to cooking.

Following the [recommendation](#) from state health agencies, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Acting Director Valerie Termini [declared](#) the recreational Dungeness crab fishery open in the remaining delayed area of Humboldt County.

Due to the potential for whales in this area to become entangled in trap buoy lines, Dungeness crab may currently only be taken with hoop nets, crab snares, or by hand in accordance with the declared trap prohibition in RAMP Fishing Zone 1. [Effective 8:01 a.m., January 2, 2026, crab trap restrictions in this area will be lifted](#) and all recreational gear types may be used statewide.

After being delayed due to entanglement risk, the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the Central Management Area (Sonoma/Mendocino County line (38°46.125' N. latitude) to Point Conception (34°27' N. latitude)) will open on January 5, 2026, at 12:01 a.m., under a 40% trap reduction. The trap reduction is expected to reduce entanglement risk for humpback whales by decreasing the number of vertical lines attached to traps in the water. The Dungeness crab season in the Northern Management Area (California/Oregon border (42° N. latitude) to the Sonoma/Mendocino County line) remains delayed because of the inability to conduct meat quality testing due to elevated levels of domoic acid. Pending results of ongoing domoic acid testing, the season will open on January 15, 2026, at 12:01 a.m., under a 15% trap reduction.

For more information related to the risk assessment process, please visit [CDFW's Whale Safe Fisheries page](#). For more information on the Dungeness crab fishery, please visit CDFW's [Invertebrates of Interest: Crab web page](#).

For the latest information on domoic acid, health advisories and season closures, please see the following:

**CDFW:**

- [Fishery closure information and health advisories page](#)
- **Domoic Acid Fishery Closure Information Line:** (831) 649-2883

**CDPH:**

- [Domoic Acid](#) results website (subsection Analytical Data – Crabs)
- [Shellfish advisories page](#) for latest consumption warnings
- **Biotoxin information Line:** (510) 412-4643 or (800) 553-4133

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# CDFW NEWS

*January 8, 2026*

## Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery to Open in Portions of Northern California, One Area Further Delayed Due to Public Health Hazard



After delays due to entanglement risk, crab meat quality issues, and elevated levels of domoic acid, the commercial Dungeness crab fishery will open in portions of northern California on Jan. 15 under a 15% gear reduction. The commercial fishery will open in the following areas at 12:01 a.m., January 15, 2026 preceded by a 64-hour gear setting period beginning at 8:01 a.m. on January 12, 2026

- California/Oregon border (42° 0.0' N. latitude) to the southern boundary of the Reading Rock State Marine Protected Areas (41° 17.6' N. latitude), and
- Cape Mendocino (40° 10.0' N. latitude) to the Sonoma/Mendocino County line (38° 46.125' N. latitude).

This follows the Jan. 5 opening of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the Central Management Area (south of the Sonoma/Mendocino County line, 38° 46.125' N. latitude).

In one area of northern California, state health agencies determined that Dungeness crab have unhealthy levels of domoic acid, a naturally occurring toxin, and recommended delaying the opening of the commercial fishery in that area. Following this [recommendation](#), the Acting Director of California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) ordered a delay in the opening of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery from the southern boundary of the Reading Rock State Marine Protected Areas (41° 17.6' N. latitude) to Cape Mendocino (40° 10.0' N. latitude).

Please see the CDFW [Director's Declaration](#) regarding allowances for transiting, possessing, and landing Dungeness crab within this closure area.

The [Fair Start Provision](#) is also triggered when there are commercial season delays along the West Coast for Dungeness crab. This provision prohibits vessels that fished in another area prior to the opening of a delayed area from fishing in the newly opened area for a period of 30 days. This will apply to the fishing areas that are scheduled to open Jan. 15 and vessels subject to Fair Start may not begin fishing in these areas until Feb 14. For more information, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for the current 2025-26 commercial Dungeness crab season.

The delayed opening of commercial Dungeness crab fishing in this area shall remain in effect until the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, in consultation with the State Public Health Officer of California Department of Public Health (CDPH), determines that domoic acid no longer poses a significant risk to public health. If a determination is made that any part of the delay should be lifted, announcements will be made as soon as possible.

;Pursuant to [Section 5523 of the Fish and Game Code](#), the CDFW Director may provide a minimum of 72-hour notice to the fleet when trap gear can be set.

Domoic acid is a potent neurotoxin produced by Pseudo-nitzschia, a naturally occurring single-celled, marine alga. Domoic acid can accumulate in shellfish, other invertebrates and sometimes fish without the organism becoming ill themselves. At low levels, domoic acid exposure can cause nausea, diarrhea and dizziness in humans. At higher levels, it can cause persistent short-term memory loss, seizures and, in severe cases, death.

The latest information on current fishing season closures related to domoic acid will be updated on CDFW's [fishery closure information and health advisories](#) website or by calling CDFW's Domoic Acid Fishery Closure Information Line at (831) 649-2883.

The latest domoic acid test results for Dungeness crab are posted on the [CDPH's Domoic Acid](#) website (subsection Analytical Data – Crabs).

For the latest consumption warnings, please check for any Dungeness crab health advisory information on the [CDPH's shellfish advisories page](#) or by calling the CDPH's Biotoxin Information Line at (510) 412-4643 or toll-free at (800) 553-4133.

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# CDFW NEWS

*January 23, 2026*

## Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery to Open in Humboldt County



The Director has [declared](#) that the last closed area of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in Humboldt County [southern boundary of the Reading Rock State Marine Protected Areas (41° 17.6' N. latitude) to Cape Mendocino (40° 10.0' N. latitude)] will open at 12:01 a.m., January 30 to be preceded by a 64-hour gear setting period beginning at 8:01 a.m. on January 27 under a [15% gear reduction](#). State health agencies determined that Dungeness

crab no longer poses a significant human health risk due to domoic acid and [recommended](#) lifting the delay in the area. With this announcement, all areas of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery are open.

The [Fair Start Provision](#) is triggered when there are commercial season delays along the West Coast for Dungeness crab. This provision prohibits vessels that fished in another area prior to the opening of a delayed area from fishing, landing and transiting in the newly opened area for a period of 30 days. This will apply to the fishing area that is scheduled to open January 30 and vessels subject to Fair Start may not begin fishing in this area until March 1.

For more information, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for the current 2025-26 commercial Dungeness crab season.

The latest information on current fishing season closures related to domoic acid will be updated on CDFW's [fishery closure information and health advisories](#) website or by calling CDFW's **Domoic Acid Fishery Closure Information Line** at (831) 649-2883.

The latest domoic acid test results for Dungeness crab are posted on the [CDPH's Domoic Acid](#) website (subsection Analytical Data – Crabs).

For the latest consumption warnings, please check for any Dungeness crab health advisory information on the CDPH's [shellfish advisories page](#) or by calling the **CDPH's Biotoxin Information Line** at (510) 412-4643 or toll-free at (800) 553-4133.

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