



State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
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**GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor**  
**MEGHAN HERTEL, Director**



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
DECLARATION OF FISHERY SEASON CLOSURE AND DEPTH CONSTRAINT  
IN THE COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS 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"), I find and declare that:

I

On April 17, 2026, I evaluated entanglement risk for the commercial Dungeness crab fisheries pursuant to Section 132.8. 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 April 14, 2026. Prior to this risk assessment and management response, Department staff reviewed all relevant information and consulted with the Working Group.

II

Observations by researchers reported to the Point Blue Conservation Science Whale Alert observed 66 humpback whales in Fishing Zone 3 during the week of April 8-14, 2026. Pursuant to 132.8(c)(2), I must implement a Fishing Zone delay or other protective management action in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

III

Pursuant to 132.8(d)(4) and (5), when assessing management actions, I must consider known historic and current marine life concentration patterns for Fishing Zones 1 and 2 and data available from adjacent Fishing Zones.

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

1. Effective April 30, 2026, at 6:00pm, a Depth Constraint limiting commercial fishing activity to inside (shallower than) 30-fathoms within Fishing Zones 1 and 2. In the commercial fishery, traps shall not be used or placed in the water seaward of the 30-fathom contour as defined in Title 50 of the Federal Code of Regulations, Part 660, Section 660.71.
2. Effective April 30, 2026, at 6:00pm, closure of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery for the remainder of the 2025-26 season in Fishing Zone 3. All commercial Dungeness crab traps must be removed from ocean waters in this Fishing Zone by that date and time. The take and possession of Dungeness crab aboard a commercially permitted vessel from closed waters is prohibited after 6:00pm on April 30, 2026, pursuant to Fish and Game Code 8276.1(c). This closure does not apply when using authorized Alternative Gear, as stated below.
3. Retrieval operations under the Lost or Abandoned Dungeness Crab Trap Gear Retrieval Program, as defined in Section 132.7 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, may begin in Fishing Zone 3 at 6:00am on May 7, 2026.
4. Pursuant to Section 132.2(a)(2)(F) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, a permitted Dungeness crab vessel may retrieve an unlimited number of commercial Dungeness crab traps which are lost, damaged, abandoned, or otherwise derelict beginning on April 3, 2026, at 6:00am in Fishing Zones 4 and 5 and May 7, 2026, at 6:00am in Fishing Zone 3. Vessels or operators using or possessing authorized Alternative Gear or otherwise participating in the Dungeness crab fishery as defined in section 132.8(i) in Fishing Zones 4 and 5 may retrieve an unlimited number of derelict traps after 6:00am on April 17, 2026. If fishing in Fishing Zone 3 with authorized Alternative Gear pursuant to Section 132.8(i), only six derelict traps belonging to another may be retrieved and possessed. After 6:00am on May 28, 2026, vessels fishing authorized Alternative Gear in Fishing Zone 3 may retrieve an unlimited number of derelict traps. All crustaceans and finfish must be immediately returned to the water and not retained when retrieving lost, abandoned, or derelict Dungeness crab traps pursuant to this declaration.

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5. Dungeness crab traps which are lost, damaged, abandoned, or otherwise derelict, for the purposes of this declaration, are defined as a Dungeness crab trap with a vertical line and buoy attached to each individual trap. Derelict traps are not gear that is being used as authorized Alternative Gear and or gear being tested under an Experimental Fishing Permit.
6. Pursuant to Section 132.2 (a)(2)(D) all vessel operators retrieving lost, abandoned, or derelict Dungeness crab traps pursuant to Section 132.2 must report their activities to [LostGear@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:LostGear@wildlife.ca.gov) and [LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov). The Department also requests individuals submit a CalTIP notification if they observe large amounts of gear from a given permit holder within a Fishing Zone.
7. Effective May 7, 2026, at 7:00am, authorized Alternative Gear may be used in Fishing Zone 3 pursuant to Section 132.8(i). Alternative Gear was authorized for use in Fishing Zones 4 and 5, beginning April 3, 2026. Alternative Gear conditions for use are available on the [Whale Safe Fisheries Webpage](#) and both the General and Specific conditions must be adhered to by all vessels operating in closed Fishing Zones while using Alternative Gear. Any person or vessel in possession of Dungeness crab in violation of the conditions for Alternative Gear use or any person using traps to take Dungeness crab in closed Fishing Zones that are in violation of the conditions for Alternative Gear may be cited pursuant to Section 132.8(j).
8. All crab taken in a Fishing Zone using Alternative Gear must also be landed in a Fishing Zone that is closed except for the use of Alternative Gear.

This management action is in effect until modified. The next risk assessment is expected to occur on or before May 1, 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](#).

Signed by:  
  
19042A1B72454D8...  
Meghan Hertel, Director

4/17/2026

9:08 AM

Date/Time

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ATTACHMENT TO DIRECTOR APRIL 17, 2026 DECLARATION OF FISHERY SEASON  
CLOSURE AND DEPTH CONSTRAINT IN THE COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS 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 April 17, 2026, and the Available Data and Preliminary Assessment document dated April 14, 2026, 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 are supported by historical migration patterns, recent increases in abundances of humpback whales in concentrated areas, spring entanglement history, and anticipated fishing effort shifts.