

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 15, 2026

The Working Group discussed Marine Region's preliminary recommendation for the commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries.

For the commercial fishery, the Department recommended a continuation of the 15% Gear Reduction and implementing a 30-fathom depth constraint in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 effective April 30, 2026. Additionally, the Department recommended a Fishery Closure for Fishing Zone 3 effective April 30, 2026, with authorization of Alternative Gear effective May 7, 2026. The Working Group provided moderate support and broad opposition for the Marine Region's recommendation in the commercial fishery.

For the recreational fishery, the Department recommended a continuation of the Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zones 4 and 5 and a Fleet Advisory in all Fishing Zones. The Working Group provided moderate support and limited opposition for the Marine Region's recommendation in the recreational fishery.

Working Group Recommendation #1: Maintain Status Quo for the Commercial Fishery

The Working Group provided a recommendation to maintain status quo for the commercial fishery in Fishing Zones 1, 2, and 3 and not implement any further management actions until the next Risk Assessment. The key rationale provided was that CDFW aerial survey data does not support additional management actions at this time, and that management actions should be considered from a data driven approach.

This recommendation received broad support and limited opposition.

Working Group Recommendation #2: Season Closure and Authorization of Alternative Gear on May 1 in Fishing Zone 3 for the Commercial Fishery

The Working Group provided a recommendation for the commercial fishery to implement a Fishery Closure in Fishing Zone 3, on April 30th and authorize Alternative Gear effective the day after the Fishery Closure, May 1, 2026. The key rationale provided was that Alternative Gear is available, and fishers would like to utilize it to maximize opportunity. Additionally Alternative Gear would provide

an economic benefit to communities. Given the remaining two months of the fishing season, a one-week delay represents a lost opportunity to fish. Additionally, Alternative Gear users can remove lost gear, which is important given the high number of whales. Enforcement of derelict gear can happen as Alternative Gear is being operated on the bottom of the ocean floor. It would also provide an opportunity for improved data on how Alternative Gear works in an approved fishery.

This recommendation received moderate support and moderate opposition.

Working Group General Recommendation

In addition to the recommendations above, the Working Group provided a general recommendation on the utilization of Alternative Gear. The Working Group recommended that Alternative Gear be authorized the day after a Season Closure date rather than a seven-day waiting period. The rationale provided was that the gear is available for use and should be utilized quickly.

This recommendation received broad support and no opposition.