

2025-2026 Risk Assessment

Available Data for Risk Assessment Mitigation Program

Last updated: June 12, 2026

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

This Preliminary Assessment and Management Recommendation has been developed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Marine Region staff to inform the Risk Assessment Mitigation Program (RAMP; Section 132.8, Title 14, California Code of Regulations). A Final Assessment and Management Recommendation will be prepared after conferring with the Working Group on June 16, 2026.

Recommended Management Actions

Commercial Fishery:

- Fishing Zones 1-2: Continue 15% Gear Reduction and 30-fathom Depth Constraint
- Fishing Zones 3-5: Season Closed (Alternative Gear authorized)

Recreational Fishery:

- Fishing Zones 3-5: Continue Crab Trap Prohibition
- All Fishing Zones: Continue Fleet Advisory

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I. Management Recommendation Summary Rationale

For the commercial fishery, Marine Region's preliminary recommendation is for the Director to continue the 15% Gear Reduction and 30-fathom Depth Constraint in Fishing Zones 1-2.

For the recreational fishery, Marine Region recommends continuing the Crab Trap Prohibition in Fishing Zones 3-5 and a Fleet Advisory for all Fishing Zones.

The commercial fishery closed in Fishing Zone 3 on April 30, 2026, and Alternative Gear was authorized May 7, 2026. Fishing Zones 4 and 5 closed for the season on March 27, 2026, and Alternative Gear was authorized for use in the commercial fishery effective April 3, 2026.

These recommendations are supported by current Marine Life Concentrations, declining fishing effort, historical migration patterns and existing Management Actions already in place for Fishing Zones 1-2. Fishing effort continues to decrease in Fishing Zones 1-2, thereby reducing the co-occurrence of vertical lines and humpback whales across open Fishing Zones. The number of permits reporting in Fishing Zones 1-2 during the June 1, 2026 reporting period was 23 permits (Zone 1 reporting 13 permits, Zone 2 reporting 10 permits), a reduction since the May 16, 2026 reporting period from 41 permits in both Zones. Furthermore, the observed humpback whales in Fishing Zone 1 were observed further offshore in depths of approximately 150 meters (82 fathoms), while fishing effort is currently constrained to depths shallower than 30 fathoms, with the average max depth fished in Zone 1 of 24 fathoms.

Available data and current Management Actions (Gear Reduction and Depth Constraint) in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 provide sufficient entanglement risk reduction through the end of the statutory season (July 15, 2026) as humpback whales continue to migrate through those Zones. Given the offshore location of observed whales, limited fishing effort and the depths where commercial activity is occurring, entanglement risk is considered to be low and will continue to decline through the end of the statutory season.

Entanglements: Two humpback whale entanglements were reported since the last Risk Assessment. On May 24, 2026, a mom/calf humpback whale pair were observed swimming closely together with a small trailing yellow buoy. Entanglement responders were able to document what appears to be a self-release, where the whale was able to break the line. The buoy and line were recovered and will be turned over to CDFW for investigation. The entanglement is still being reviewed by NMFS but is believed to be recreational crab trap gear and therefore will not be considered pursuant to RAMP regulations. A second entanglement was reported on May 25, 2026, off Moss Landing by a whale watch vessel. The whale appeared to be trailing a single orange and yellow bullet buoy closely behind the whale. Photo documentation of the fluke shows a purple and black line and the entanglement is still under investigation by NMFS. Entanglement responders were unable to locate the animal and it is presumed still entangled.

Marine Life Concentrations: CDFW aerial surveys on June 8-9, 2026, observed 26 humpback whales in Fishing Zone 1, and one humpback whale and one unidentified whale in Fishing Zone 2. A joint USCG/CDFW aerial survey was conducted on June 9, 2026, and observed 27 unidentified whales in Fishing Zone 1.

For additional details, see the Entanglement and Marine Life Concentration sections of this Available Data document.

II. Alternative Management Actions for the Commercial Fishery

Alternatives Considered but Rejected

- Fishery Closure for Fishing Zones 1 and 2- most protective but in consideration of currently low fishing effort in Fishing Zones 1 and 2 and the depths where humpback whales were observed, it was not the recommended Management Action at this time.

AVAILABLE DATA

III. Triggers Requiring Management Action

I. Confirmed Entanglements: §132.8(a)(4); Information from NOAA: §132.8(d)(2); and Triggers for Management Action: §132.8(c)

Data provided by: Lauren Saez and Dan Lawson (National Marine Fisheries Service)

The table below outlines the confirmed entanglements under RAMP beginning with the 2026 calendar year. See “[2025-2026 Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery - Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)” for information about the RAMP Entanglement Evaluation. More information and definitions, please see the [RAMP Entanglement History](#) document.

The current Entanglement Evaluation is 1.00 for humpback whales for the 2026 calendar year. Until November 1, 2028, a Confirmed Entanglement in Unknown Fishing Gear shall be applied as one-quarter (0.25) of a Confirmed Entanglement in California Commercial Dungeness Crab Gear. As of June 12, 2026, there have been zero Confirmed Entanglements of blue whales or leatherback sea turtles during the 2026 calendar year.

Table 1. Actionable Species Entanglements beginning in 2026, pursuant to RAMP regulations. Note: * denotes entanglement is still under review by NMFS. Bold denotes newly reported entanglements since the last Risk Assessment.

Entanglement ID	Date	Species	Fishery	Score
20260525Mn	05/25/26	Humpback whale	Under Review*	Under review
20260524Mn	05/24/26	Humpback whale	Under Review*	Under Review
20260503Mn	05/03/26	Humpback whale	Recreational gear*	NA
20260426Mn	04/26/26	Humpback whale	Unknown	0.25
20260410Mn	04/10/26	Humpback whale	Unknown	0.25
20260228Mn	02/28/26	Humpback whale	Unknown	0.25
20260208Mn	02/08/26	Humpback whale	Unknown	0.25

II. Marine Life Concentrations: §132.8(c)(2)

Data provided by: CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, Monterey Bay Whale Watch (processed by Karin Forney, Upwell)

According to the RAMP regulations for the period of March 1 until the Fishing Season closes statewide a trigger has been met when:

- The number of humpback whales is greater than or equal to 10, or there is a running average of five or more animals over a one-week period within a single Fishing Zone.
- The number of blue whales is greater than or equal to three, or there is a running average of three or more animals over a one-week period within a single Fishing Zone
- The number of Pacific leatherback sea turtles is greater than or equal to one within any Fishing Zone

Table 21. Summary of available CDFW-approved survey data for Marine Life Concentrations for each Fishing Zone, and whether the triggers have been met for any Fishing Zone.

Fishing Zone	CDFW-approved survey data	Triggers attained?
Zone 1	CDFW Aerial Survey, Joint USCG/CDFW Aerial Survey	Yes
Zone 2	CDFW Aerial Survey	No
Zone 3	Season Closed	NA
Zone 4	Season Closed	NA
Zone 5	Season Closed	NA

A. CDFW Surveys (Fishing Zones 1 and 2)

On June 8, 2026, CDFW conducted an aerial survey covering Fishing Zone 2 (Figure 1). CDFW flew the zigzag transect line from Stewart's Point to Shelter Cove between the coast and the 100-meter depth contour line at an altitude of 700-1000 ft. Skies were cloudy south of Point Arena but then overcast north of Point Arena. The survey ended in Shelter Cove due to rain and low visibility. Cloud cover was higher than the survey altitude and did not obstruct visibility prior to ending the survey. Seas were mostly calm and ranged between Beaufort states 1 and 2, while just south of Point Arena they ranged from states 3-5. Observer staff recorded one humpback whale and one unidentified whale during the survey (Table 3).

On June 9, 2026, CDFW conducted an aerial survey covering Fishing Zone 1 and the north end of Fishing Zone 2 (Figure 2). CDFW flew the zigzag transect line from Shelter Cove to the California/Oregon border between the coast and the 100-meter depth contour line at an altitude of 900-1100 ft. Skies were clear for the entire survey. For the first minutes of the survey, seas were calm and ranged between Beaufort states 1 and 2 while around Cape Mendocino they ranged between states 3 and 4. At Eel River, seas went back to Beaufort states of between 1 and 2 up to the California/Oregon border. Observer staff recorded one humpback whale in northern Fishing Zone 2 and 26 humpback whales in Fishing Zone 1 (Table 3).

Table 3. Counts of Actionable Species seen by CDFW aerial survey conducted on June 8-9, 2026.

Survey Date	Fishing Zone	Humpback whales	Unidentified whales
6/9/26	Zone 1	26	0
6/8/26	Zone 2	1	1

CDFW Aerial Survey - June 8, 2026

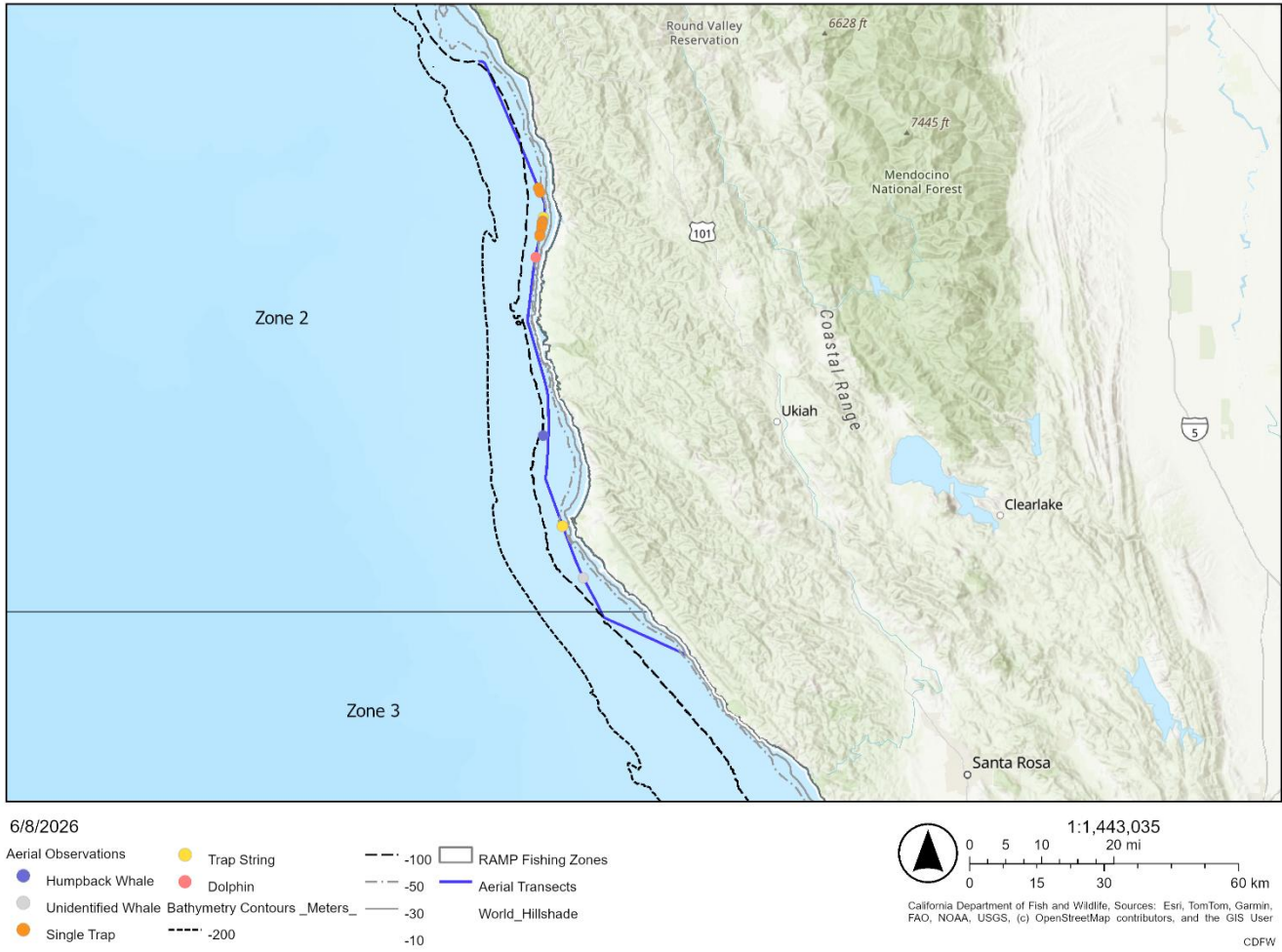


Figure 1. Map of CDFW aerial survey conducted on June 8, 2026, in Fishing Zone 2.

CDFW Aerial Survey - June 9, 2026

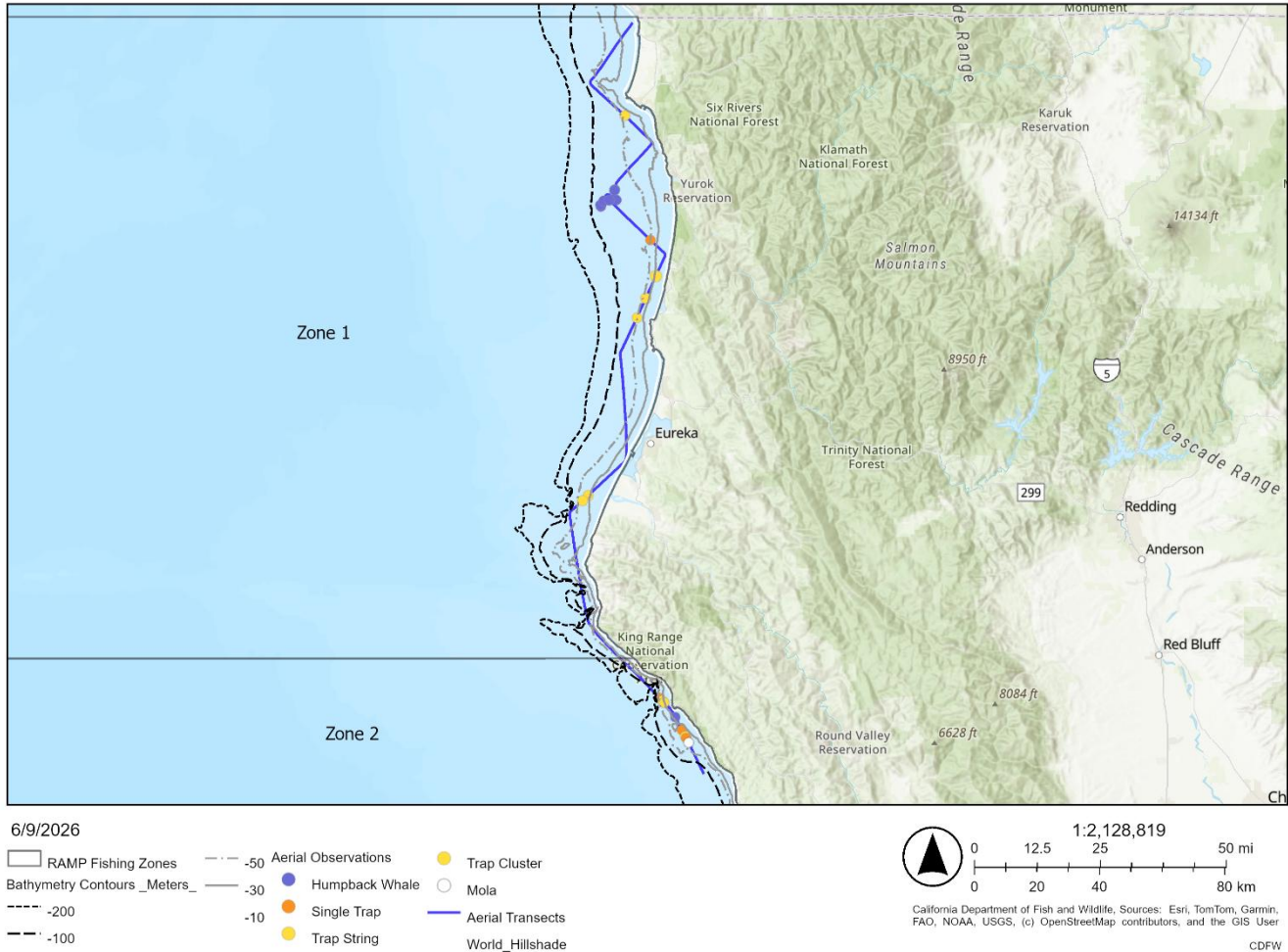


Figure 2. Map of CDFW aerial survey conducted on June 9, 2026, in Fishing Zone 1.

B. Joint U.S. Coast Guard/CDFW Aerial Survey (Fishing Zone 1)

On June 9, 2026, the U.S. Coast Guard conducted an aerial survey from the coast to seaward of the state water line at an altitude of 300-500 ft covering Fishing Zone 1 (Figure 3). This survey spanned from the CA-OR border to False Cape. Conditions were ideal (Beaufort scale = 1-3) for a majority of the survey, although there were intermittent patches where wind chop was present (Beaufort scale = 3-5). Staff observed 27 whales in the southern half of Del Norte County. The majority of the observed whales were traveling as one large group, as many were in pairs and

several appeared to be mother/calf pairs. The observed whales were likely humpback whales but included some gray whales as well.

Joint USCG/CDFW Aerial Survey - June 9, 2026

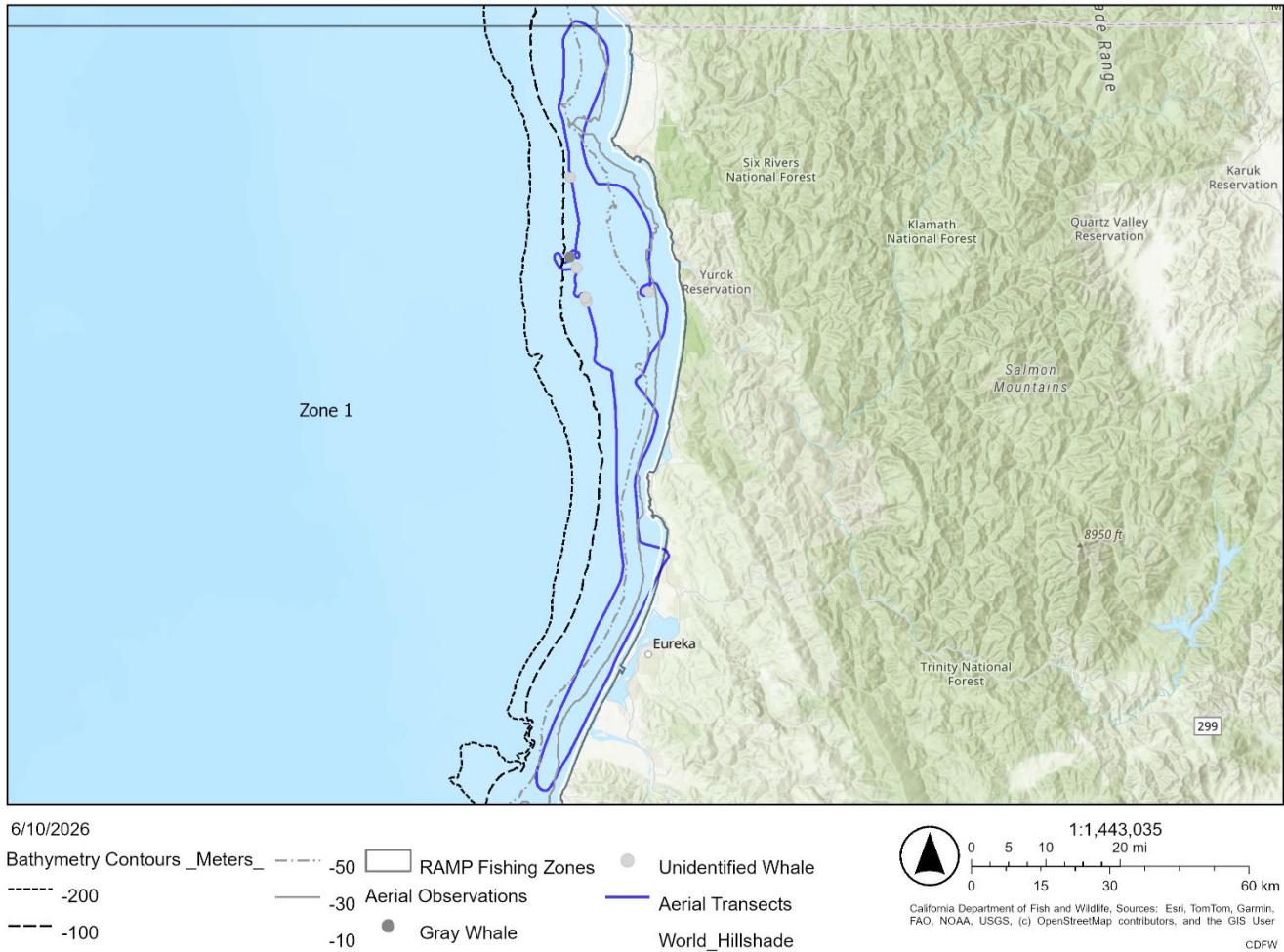


Figure 3. Map of joint U.S. Coast Guard and CDFW aerial survey conducted in Fishing Zone 1 on June 9, 2026.

C. Monterey Bay Whale Watch Surveys (Fishing Zone 4)

Monterey Bay Whale Watch conducted whale-watching trips in southern Monterey Bay on six of seven days during the week of June 1-7, 2026. The 7-day average number of humpback whales-per-half-day-trip during June 1-7, 2026, was 9.1, with a peak of 25 humpback whales observed during a morning trip on June 5th (Figure 4). No blue whales have been observed since May 8 - 12, 2026, when a single whale was observed on multiple trips.

**Monterey Bay Whale Watch: Humpback whales per 1/2-day trip
(Nov 15, 2021 - Jun 7, 2026)**

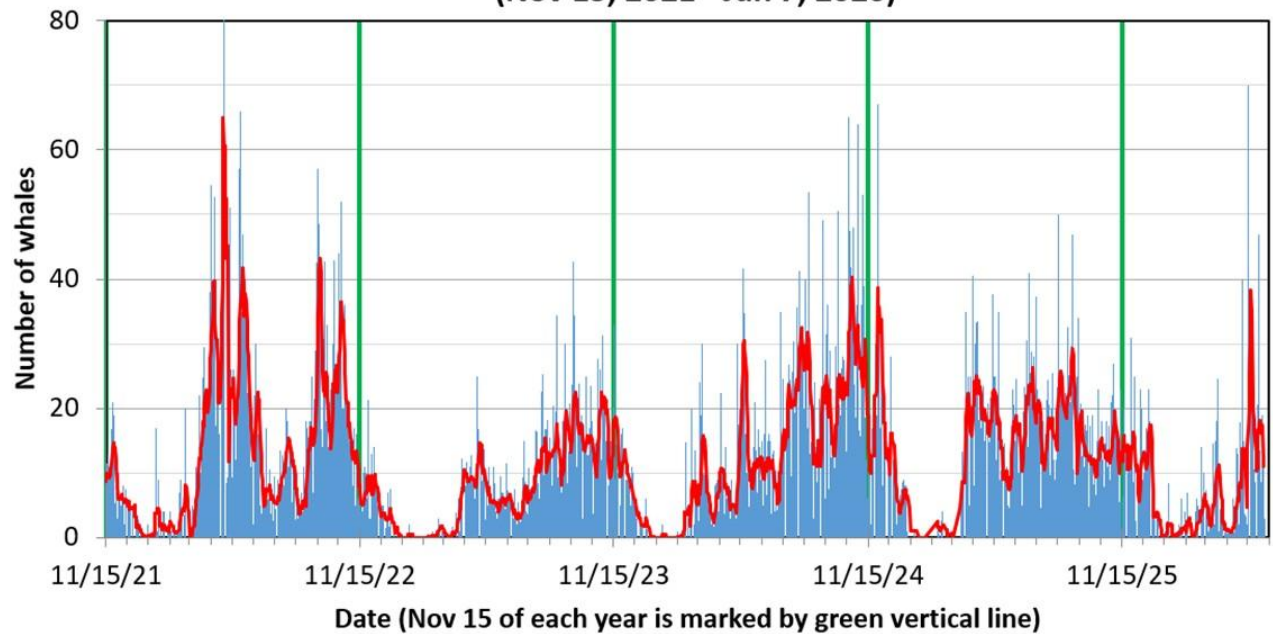


Figure 4. Standardized number of humpback whale sightings for Monterey Bay Whale Watch from November 15, 2021 – June 7, 2026. The y-axis is the number of whales per half-day trip; the thin blue bars are the average daily whale numbers, and the red line is a 7-day running average to make the patterns a bit easier to see. A vertical green line has been added at November 15 of each year for reference. Each tick mark is one month.

IV. Management Considerations

- I. Historic patterns and current Actionable Species migration: §132.8(d)(5)

Data provided by: Point Blue Conservation Science and Monterey Bay Whale Watch (processed by Karin Forney, Upwell)

A. Point Blue Conservation Science (Fishing Zones 3, 4, and Santa Barbara Channel)

For current observation data please see the [Point Blue Whale Alert map](#).

Table 4. Summary of available humpback and blue whale recorded reported via Point Blue Conservation Science in Fishing Zones 3, 4, and the Santa Barbara Channel during the seven-day period ending June 10, 2026.

Fishing Zone	Number of humpback whales sighted	Number of blue whales sighted
Zone 3	1	0
Zone 4	0	0
Santa Barbara Channel	22	0

B. Monterey Bay Whale Watch (Fishing Zone 4)

The semi-monthly average number of humpback whales-per-half-day-trip in southern Monterey Bay is slightly below the historical average for this time of year (Figure 5).

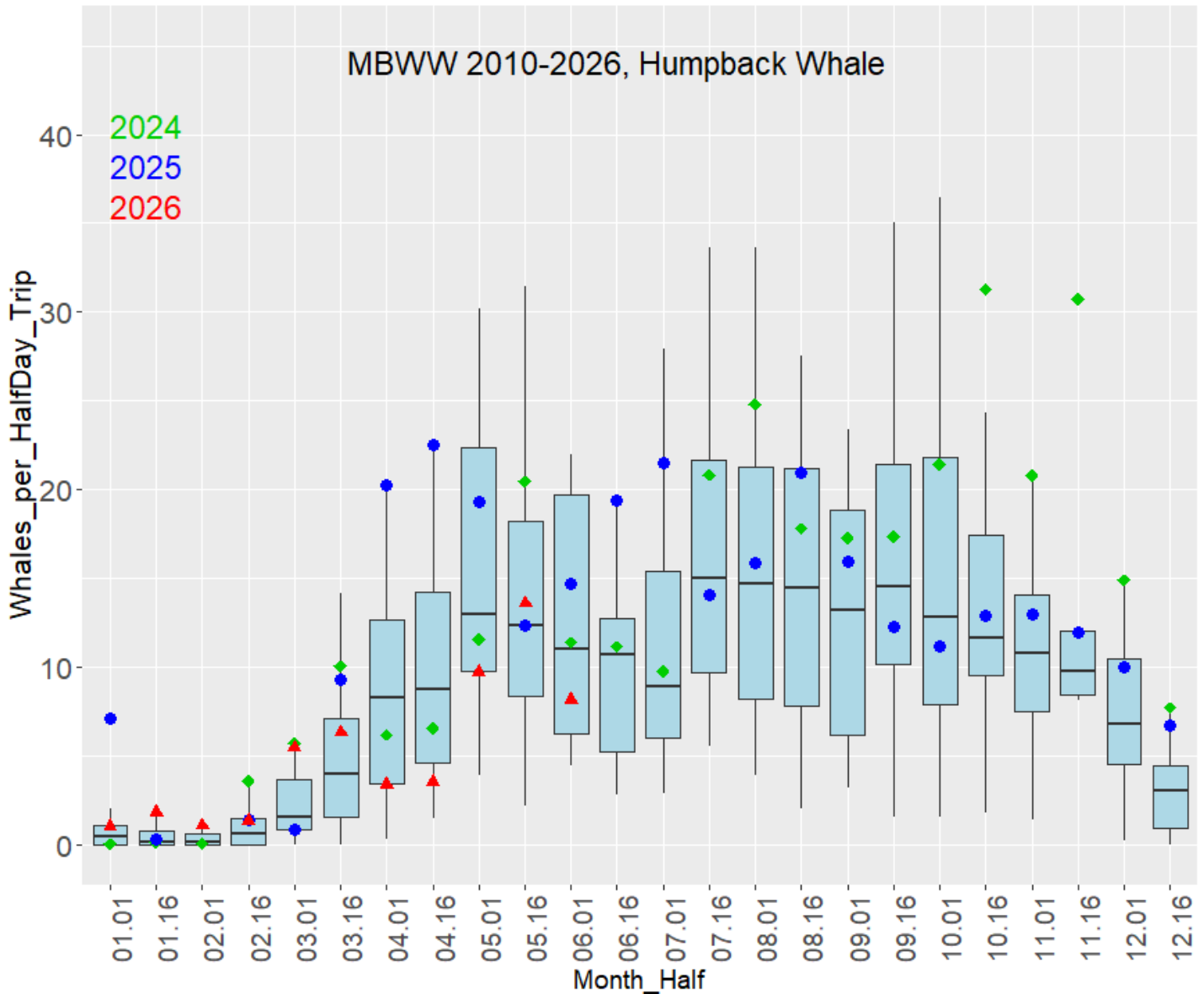


Figure 5. Historical Monterey Bay Whale Watch data for 2010-2026, summarizing the average and variation in the number of humpback whales per half-day trip on a semi-monthly basis (1st- 15th, 16th-end of month). This boxplot follows standard statistical practice in that the black horizontal line is the average number of whales; the blue box shows the 25th-75th percentiles (i.e., half of all past whale numbers are within the blue box); the vertical lines show the range of whale numbers excluding outliers, and outliers are shown as small black dots. Values for 2024 (green diamonds), 2025 (blue dots) and 2026 (red triangles) and are provided for reference, placing recent whale numbers in a historical context.

C. Whale Watch 2.0 (All Fishing Zones)

Blue whale habitat predictions for June 10, 2026, show low habitat suitability in Fishing Zone 1, moderate habitat suitability in Fishing Zones 2 and 3, and moderate to high habitat suitability in Fishing Zones 4, 5, and south to the US-Mexico border.

Current habitat suitability maps can be accessed at [NOAA Coastwatch Habitat Suitability Map](#).

II. Fishing Season dynamics: § 132.8(d)(6)

A. Marine Landings Data System (All Fishing Zones)

*Data provided by: California Department of Fish and Wildlife. *CDFW data presented in this section is preliminary and subject to revision.*

Fishing Zones 1 and 2 are currently open under a 15% Gear Reduction and 30-fathom Depth Constraint. Fishing Zone 3 closed on April 30, 2026, with authorized Alternative Gear beginning May 7, 2026. Fishing Zones 4 and 5 closed on March 27, 2026, with Alternative Gear beginning April 3, 2026. A summary of landings from all Fishing Zones is provided below (Table 5).

Table 5. Summary of fishing season dynamics information for the commercial fishery, as of June 10, 2026. Values below do not include Alternative Gear landings.

Metric	Value
Season status	Zones 1-2 are under a 15% Gear Reduction & 30-fathom Depth Constraint; Zones 3-5 are closed; open to Alternative Gear
Number of landings	4,959
Total volume (pounds)	8,612,385
Total Ex-Vessel Value	\$42,899,803
Average unit price	\$5.46
Total number of active vessels	376
Maximum potential traps (based on active permits)*	93,070

** Estimates are also provided in the Bi-Weekly Fishing Activity Reports Subsection*

Total volume (pounds) peaked during the week of January 19, 2026, at 2.58 million pounds and has since been decreasing (Figure 6). Fishing Zone 1 shows the highest landings over the course of the season at 4.55 million pounds, followed by Fishing Zone 3 at 2.88 million pounds.

Volume of Landings (Pounds), by Week and Fishing Zone, 2025-26 Season

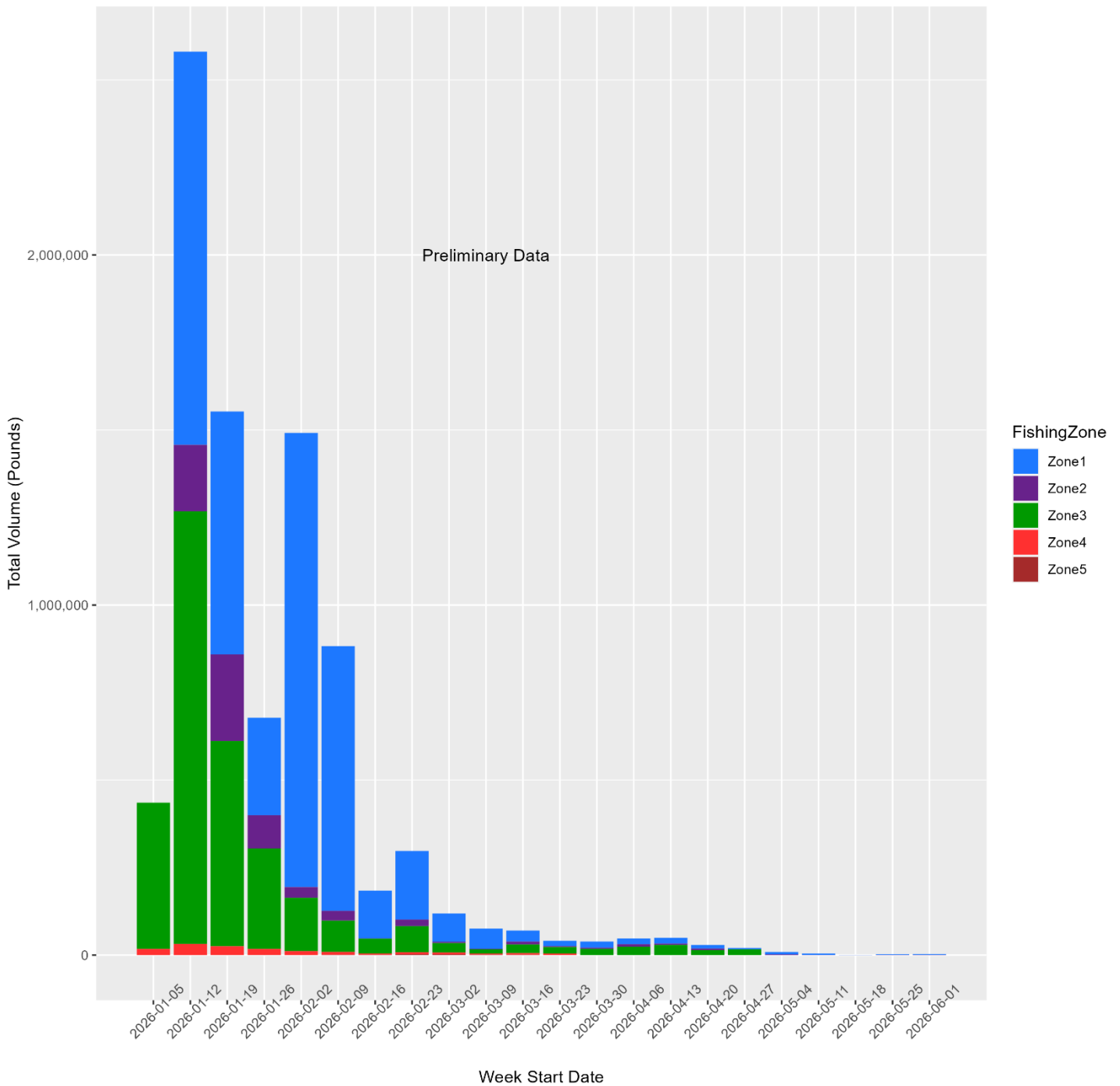


Figure 6. Volume (pounds) landed by week and Fishing Zone. Week 1 starts with the first day the commercial Dungeness crab fishery was open in any area, January 5, 2024. All data are preliminary and subject to change. Certain week-Fishing Zone combinations are withheld due to confidentiality constraints.

Fishing Zones 1 and 3 show the highest number of active vessels throughout the fishing season to date with a high of 334 active vessels (Figure 7). The number of active vessels peaked in early February and has fluctuated with a slight decline since then.

Number of Active Vessels, by Week and FishingZone, 2025-26 Season

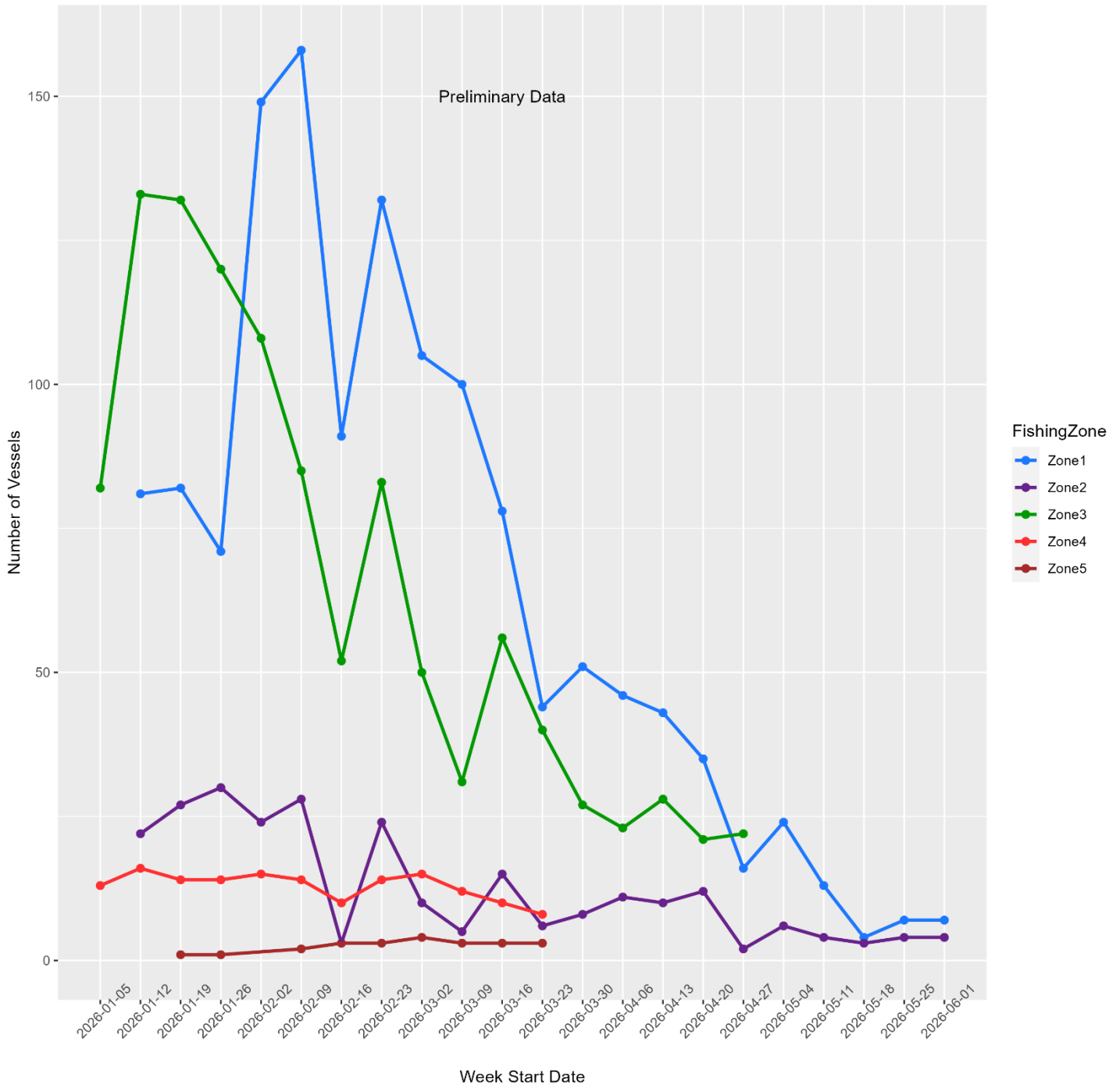


Figure 7. Number of active vessels by week and Fishing Zone. Week 1 starts with the first day the commercial Dungeness crab fishery was open in any area, January 5, 2024. All data are preliminary and subject to change. Some week-Fishing Zone combinations are withheld due to confidentiality constraints.

B. Bi-Weekly Fishing Activity Reports (All Fishing Zones)

CDFW has received bi-weekly reports for this season starting on the first reporting period of January 16, 2026, through the most recent reporting period of June 1, 2026. A summary of reports received for May 16, 2026 (Table 6), a summary of reports received for June 1, 2026 (Table 7), and a summary of traps deployed by Fishing Zone for each reporting period (Table 8) are provided below. Note that these summaries may not reflect all permitted vessels participating in the fishery due to compliance issues. To date, CDFW has received 288 final reports with a total of 1,449 lost traps reported.

Table 6. Summary of information provided for the May 16, 2026, bi-weekly reporting period by Fishing Zone (1-5). Accessed from CDFW's Bi-Weekly Reporting database on June 10, 2026. NR-C refers to data withheld due to confidentiality. All data are preliminary and subject to change. *denotes Alternative Gear bi-weekly report submissions.

Fishing Zone	Permits Reporting	Avg. Trap Number	Total Traps Set	Avg. Min. Depth (fa.)	Avg. Max. Depth (fa.)	Max. Depth (fa.)	Number of Newly Lost Traps
Zone 1	29	204	4,710	10	20	30	35
Zone 2	12	121	1,461	13	22	30	5
Zone 3*	15	319	4,796	18	39	65	20
Zone 4*	5	154	771	21	29	52	0
Zone 5*	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C
Totals	61	NA	11,738	NA	NA	NA	60

Table 7. Summary of information provided for the June 1, 2026, bi-weekly reporting period by Fishing Zone (1-5). Accessed from CDFW's Bi-Weekly Reporting database on June 10, 2026. NR-C refers to data withheld due to confidentiality. All data are preliminary and subject to change. *denotes Alternative Gear bi-weekly report submissions.

Fishing Zone	Permits Reporting	Avg. Trap Number	Total Traps Set	Avg. Min. Depth (fa.)	Avg. Max. Depth (fa.)	Max. Depth (fa.)	Number of Newly Lost Traps
Zone 1	13	150	1,958	12	24	30	0
Zone 2	10	123	1,107	13	25	30	2
Zone 3*	16	318	4,779	18	37	65	21
Zone 4*	5	155	776	20	29	48	0
Zone 5*	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C	NR-C
Totals	44	NA	8,620	NA	NA	NA	23

Table 8. Total reported traps deployed in each Fishing Zone for the most recent six bi-weekly reporting periods. NR-C refers to data withheld due to confidentiality. All data are preliminary and subject to change. *denotes Alternative Gear bi-weekly report submissions.

Fishing Zone	Mar 16 - Total Traps	Apr 1 - Total Traps	Apr 16 - Total Traps	May 1 - Total Traps	May 16 - Total Traps	Jun 1 -Total Traps
Zone 1	35,623	25,944	14,679	9,033	4,710	1,958
Zone 2	3,135	3,224	2,808	2,565	1,461	1,107
Zone 3	9,266	7,063	5,550	3,196	4,796*	4,779*
Zone 4	1,497	1,070	886*	1,221*	771*	776*
Zone 5	536	173	0	NR-C*	NR-C*	NR-C*
Totals	50,057	37,474	23,923	16,015	11,738	8,620

C. Alternative Gear Landings

Alternative Gear activity began on April 3, 2026, in Fishing Zones 4-5 and on May 7, 2026, in Fishing Zone 3. As of June 10, 2026, landings data show that 28 vessels have made 154 unique landings for a total of 91,736 pounds landed for a total ex-vessel value of \$772,541 (Figures 8 and 9). The average unit price is \$7.06 per pound.

Volume of AG Landings (Pounds) by Week, 2025-26 Season

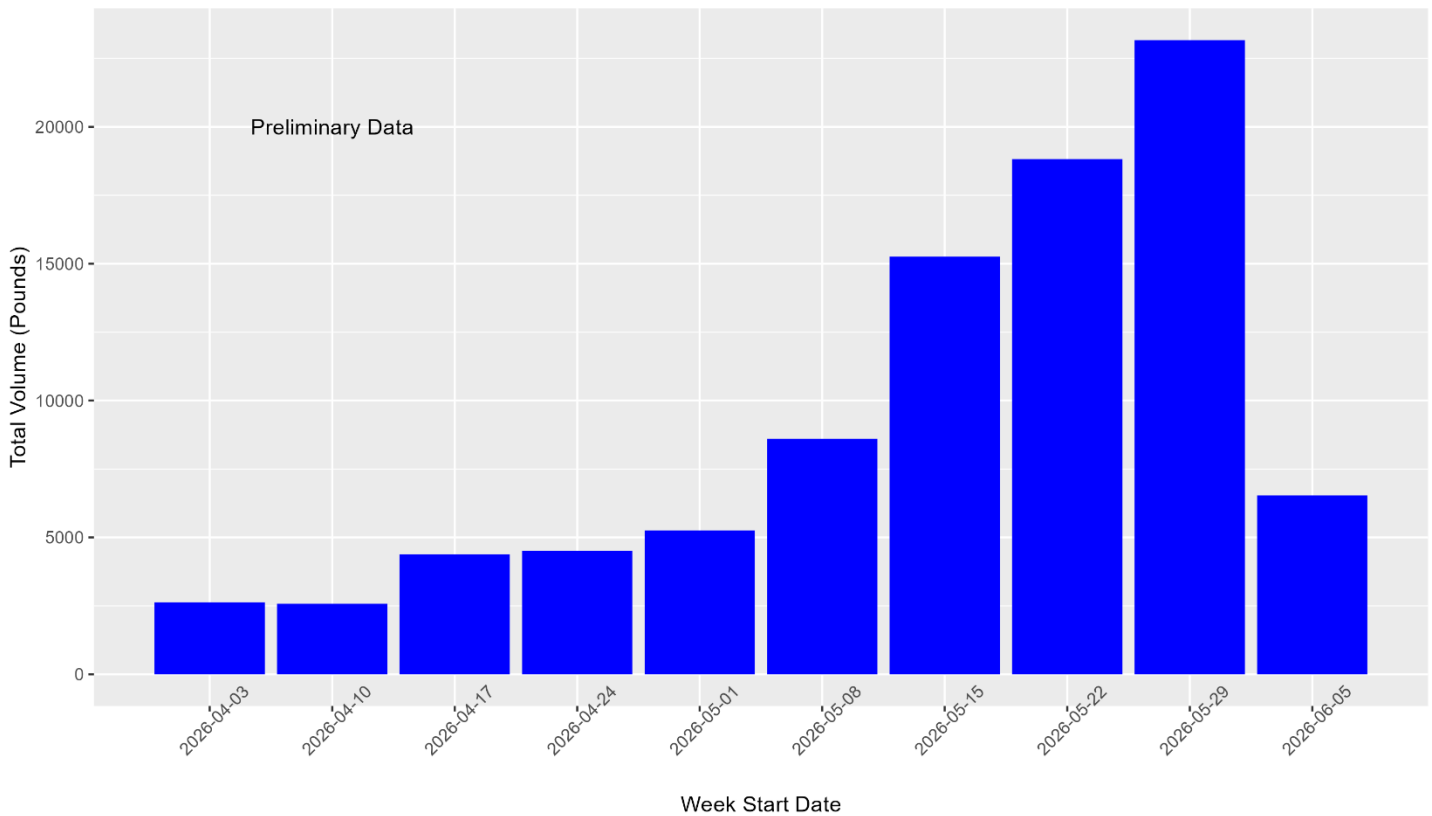


Figure 8. Volume (pounds) landed by week for Alternative Gear. Week 1 starts with the first day Alternative Gear was authorized in any area, April 3, 2026. All data are preliminary and subject to change.

Number of Alt Gear Vessels by Week and Fishing Zone, 2025-26 Season

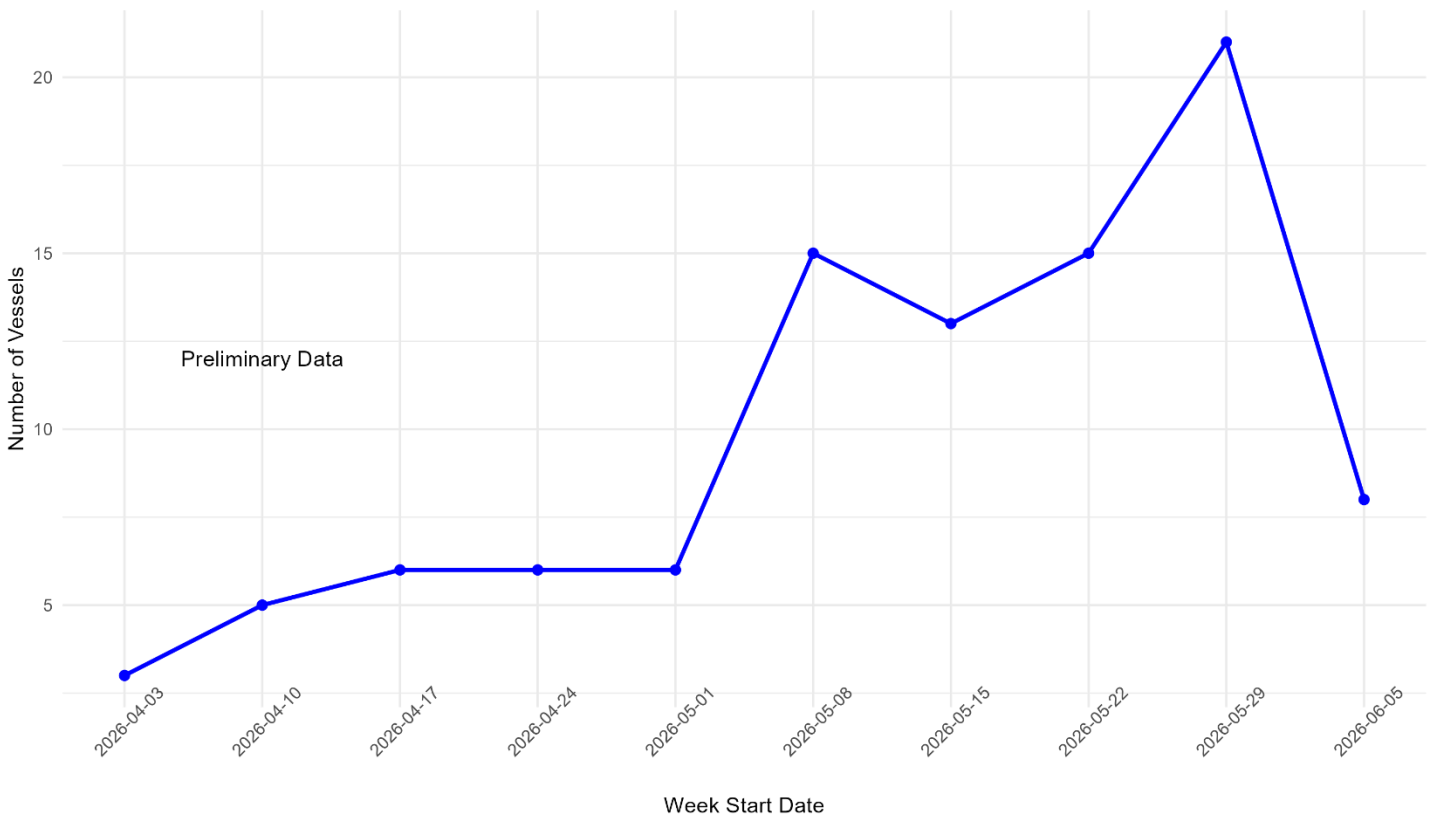


Figure 9. Number of active vessels by week for Alternative Gear. Week 1 starts with the first day Alternative Gear was authorized in any area, April 3, 2026. All data are preliminary and subject to change.

III. Distribution and abundance of key forage: §132.8(d)(7)

A. MBARI Krill Model

Modeled zooplankton conditions for May 2026 indicate expected concentrations from the CA/OR border to Point Sur, and higher than expected concentrations from Point Sur to Point Conception (Fishing Zone 5). Current data can be accessed from the [MBARI webpage](#).

IV. Ocean conditions: §132.8(d)(8)

A. El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Diagnostic

El Niño is likely to emerge soon (82% chance in May-July 2026) and continue through Northern Hemisphere winter 2026-27 (96% chance in December 2026-Feb 2027). Please visit the [NOAA ENSO Diagnostic webpage](#) for more information.

B. Large Marine Heatwave Tracker

As of May 19, 2026, current coastal sea surface temperatures off California remain very warm. The current temperature anomalies are not due to the El Niño forecast, and it remains to be seen if these coastal warm anomalies continue through summer as seasonal upwelling in this area during summer may lead to lower

temperatures. During April and early May there have been some upwelling and cooling north of San Francisco.

The current heatwave forecast suggests a high likelihood that marine heatwaves will continue through the spring and summer in offshore regions, with an increasing likelihood of marine heatwaves in coastal regions. NOAA anticipates a combined influence of El Nino and the heatwave anomalies during the fall and winter of 2026. This will likely result in a prolonged duration of warmer than normal temperatures in the coastal region.

Please visit the [NOAA Marine Heatwave Tracker webpage](#) for more information.

C. Habitat Compression Index

No new available data. Please see the [March 10, 2026, Available Data and Preliminary Assessment document](#) or the [NOAA Habitat Compression Index webpage](#) for more information.