2026-2027 CALIFORNIA COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY INFORMATION

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2025-2026 Season Highlights

$6.04 average price per pound

87% harvest caught in first 6 weeks

370 vessels made landings

Surface lines now marked and first season for alternative gear

2025-2026 Season Summary

Season Overview

The Northern Management Area opened under a 15% gear reduction with the northern portion of Fishing Zone 1 and all of Zone 2 opening on January 15, 2026, while the southern portion of Zone 1 (south of the Reading Rock State Marine Protected Area) opened on January 30, 2026. Lack of quality testing and domoic acid delayed the Northern Management Area. A 30-fathom depth restriction was implemented on April 30 for Fishing Zones 1 and 2 and then closed on July 15.

The Central Management Area opened on January 5, 2026, with a 40% gear reduction. Marine life entanglement risk delayed the Central Management Area. On March 27, the season closed in Fishing Zones 4 and 5, and April 30 in Fishing Zone 3.

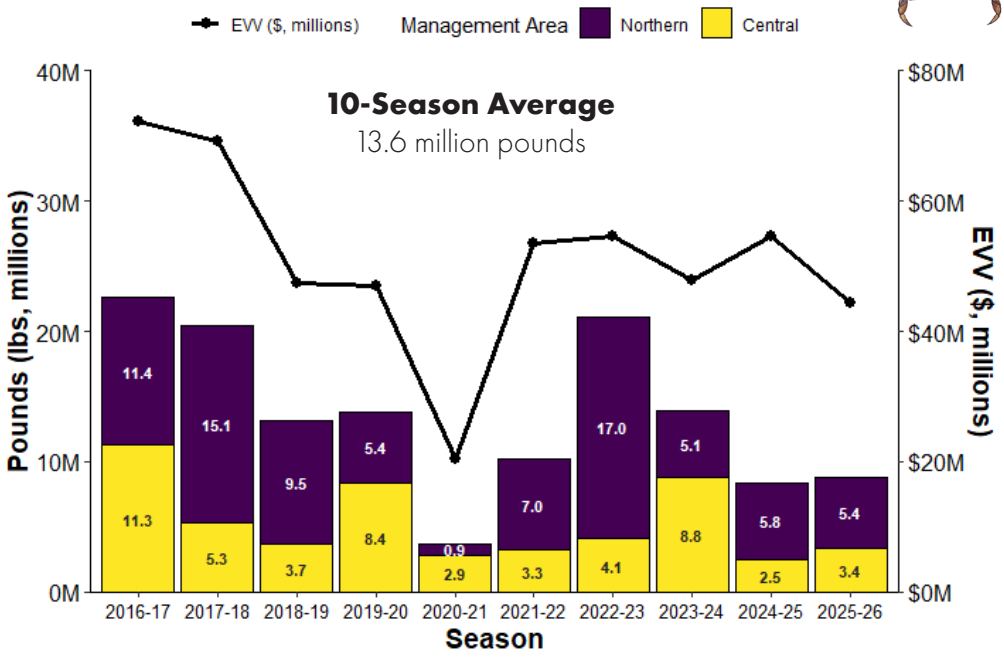
Alternative Gear was authorized for the first time this season in Fishing Zones 3, 4, and 5, a week after their respective early closures.



2025-2026 Alternative Gear Summary Stats

- 28 Vessels
- 288 Landings
- 150k Pounds
- $1.2 Million Ex-Vessel Value

Historical Snapshot: 10-Season Summary





2025-2026 Totals
8.8 million pounds
$44.4 million EVV

Figure 1. Summary of landings and total value by season and management area from 2016-2017 to 2025-2026. Colored bars represent landings in millions of pounds (primary y-axis) by management area (northern in purple and central in yellow) with black line representing ex-vessel value (EVV; secondary y-axis). 2025-2026 totals include alternative gear landings.

Line Marking

Phased line marking in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery continues this season, with 25% of all deployed gear being marked in the upper 15 fathoms. **All surface lines require the dual-colored purple and black line.** Line markings are intended to help identify instances where Dungeness crab gear is involved in a whale entanglement. For more information, visit the Whale Safe Fisheries web page's Gear Marking section.

Line Marking Timeline

Percent of traps needing dual-colored purple and black line in the upper **15 fathoms*** for the next three seasons are shown below.

2026-2027 Season: 25% deployed gear
2027-2028 Season: 50% deployed gear
2028-2029 Season: 100% deployed gear

**When fishing with less than 20 fathoms of total line, up to five fathoms of the line closest to the crab pot may be any color.*

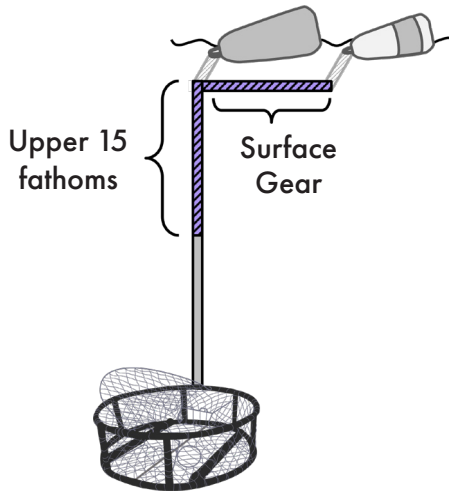


Figure 2. Diagram showing the portion of line required to be marked purple and black.

Alternative Gear Authorization

Authorized gear can only be used after April 1st in a closed Fishing Zone when authorized by the Director. Vessels must adhere to all conditions when using authorized gear. Individuals who are interested in using authorized gear can find more information in the Alternative Gear tab of the Whale Safe Fisheries web

! New Alternative Gear Code: 29

Using Alternative Gear? Use the new Gear Code 29 (Stringing Dungeness Crab Traps) in E-Tix.

Conservation Plan Update

CDFW is seeking an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery under the Endangered Species Act. CDFW submitted the most recent draft and ITP application to NOAA Fisheries in January 2026. Once accepted, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will initiate a public review process which will include opportunities for public comment. For more information, visit the Whale Safe Fisheries web page's Conservation Plan section.

Visit the Whale Safe Fisheries Web Page for more information

Whale Entanglement Update

2026 Entanglement Update

In 2026, seven Confirmed Entanglements of humpback whales were reported in either California commercial Dungeness crab gear or unidentified California fishing gear (no entanglements of blue whales or leatherback sea turtles were reported). The current **Entanglement Score is 3.25*** for the 2026 calendar year, resulting in an **automatic season delay until at least January 1, 2027**. For more information and to track opening dates, please visit the Whale Safe Fisheries web page at wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries.

**Entanglement Evaluation Score may increase as new entanglements are reported and reviewed by NMFS.*

Date	Report Location	Gear Set Location	Fishery	Score
2/08/26	Santa Barbara, CA	Unknown	Unknown	0.25
2/28/26	Monterey, CA	Unknown	Unknown	0.25
4/10/26	San Diego, CA	Unknown	Unknown	0.25
4/26/26	Monterey, CA	Unknown	Unknown	0.25
5/25/26	Monterey, CA	Half Moon Bay, CA	CA Commercial Dcrab	1.00
6/27/26	Monterey, CA	Unknown	Unknown	0.25
8/05/26	Newport Beach, CA	Unknown	CA Commercial Dcrab	1.00

Table 1. Confirmed humpback whale entanglements reported in 2026 in California commercial Dungeness crab gear or unidentified California fishing gear.



Reporting Entanglements

Report all entanglement sightings to the **National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)** entanglement response hotline at **1-877-SOS-WHALE (1-877-767-9425)** or report to the **U.S. Coast Guard** on **Channel 16**. If possible, stand by until a response team arrives and document the entanglement with photos or videos. To learn more about assessing and reporting marine life entanglements, take the Level 1 First Responder free training online at https://training.whaledisentanglement.org.

When Reporting Entanglements:

- Do not attempt to disentangle!
- Maintain distance of 100 yards
- Note date, time, location
- Take photos
- Respond promptly if contacted by NMFS or CDFW



Entangled humpback whale, NMFS

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2025-2026 Summary of Trap Activity

Fishing activity reports document the **number of traps deployed** over the fishing season. After all areas of the state opened to commercial fishing, there was a **maximum of 82,223 traps reported** by mid-February. These numbers were derived from the 375 permitted vessels that provided reports during the season.

End of season reports capture the **number of lost traps** (see box below for more information).

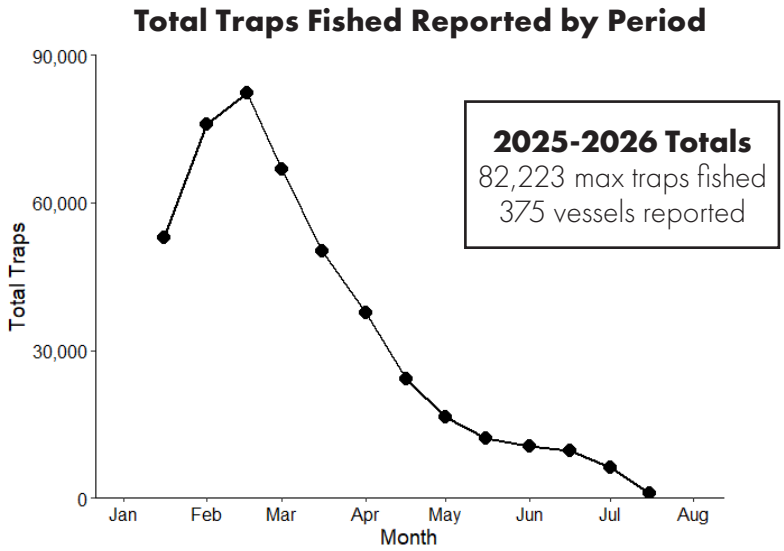


Figure 3. Total number of traps fished as reported on fishing activity reports between January 16 and July 16 report periods for the 2025-2026 season.

Total Lost Traps Reported

304 vessels reported lost traps during the past season (out of 375 vessels that submitted fishing activity reports).

1,685 total lost traps were reported.*

Lost traps accounted for 2% of total traps fished for the 2025-2026 season.



**CDFW acknowledges that lost traps may be recovered during normal fishing operations and may not accurately reflect all traps that are removed during or after the season ends. These numbers are provided for informational purposes only.*

Gear Recovery Efforts

There are a variety of efforts ongoing across the state to retrieve lost Dungeness crab traps during and after the season. You can report the location of lost gear to **PCFFA's Commercial Fishermen's Gear Recovery Network** using their online form. The form and more information about the program can be found at **www.pcffa.org/network**.

If you can recover lost trap gear, please report this information to **lostgear@wildlife.ca.gov**. Reports should indicate date and time of retrieval, number of traps, GPS location, any tag information on traps, and reasons why the operator believes traps are derelict.

After the end of the season, CDFW permits vessels under the **Trap Gear Retrieval Program** to receive compensation from the owner of any lost and derelict Dungeness crab gear retrieved. Efforts under this program require additional documentation which must be submitted formally to CDFW.



Submitting Fishing Activity Reports

Permit holders must submit fishing activity reports while using Dungeness crab gear, **including Alternative Gear**. Reports are due on or before the **1st and 16th day of each month** to WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov and must include:

- Report date (e.g., February 1, February 16)
- Permit number (CT or CN with 4-digit number and tier)
- Current Fishing Zone(s)
- Number of deployed traps
- Depth range (fathoms)
- Number of recently lost traps

You can also submit Fishing Activity reports using CDFW's online form

End of Season Reports

Two weeks after submitting your final fishing activity report, every permitholder must also report the **total number of traps lost during the season** and the **buoy tag numbers attached to lost traps** to WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov.

Additional Reminders

- Always report fishing activity on each report. When you have "stacked out", please report the number of traps you had deployed during the previous two weeks before the report was due.
- At the end of the 2026-2027 season, don't dispose of your tags until you account for any buoy tags that may be associated with lost traps for your end of season lost trap tag report.
- If lost traps are recovered at a later date, you may report them to CDFW so we can update this information on your behalf.



Enforcement Reminders

- **Gear Waivers:** If you cannot tend your gear every 96 hours for any reason other than weather, you must (immediately and or promptly) obtain a waiver for another vessel to retrieve your gear by contacting CDFW's License and Revenue Branch: LRBCOMM@wildlife.ca.gov.
- **Permit Renewals:** Commercial Dungeness crab permits expire on March 31. If you plan to continue fishing after March 31, ensure that your license is renewed in advance of the expiration date.
- **96-Hour Rule:** Trap gear shall be raised, cleaned, serviced, and emptied at intervals not to exceed 96 hours, weather conditions at sea permitting; abandonment prohibited.
- **Trap Ownership:** It is unlawful to disturb, move, or damage any trap that belongs to another person.
- **Trap Removal:** At the end of the season or by date of closure provided in a Director Declaration announced by CDFW, all traps are to be removed from ocean waters.
- **Update Contact Information:** All Dungeness crab permitholders are required to notify CDFW of new mailing addresses within 3 months of change. Please also keep email and phone numbers current to ensure CDFW is able to notify you and provide important updates related to the fishery.
- **Electronic Monitoring:** Vessels participating in the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery must have a functioning satellite or cellular based electronic monitoring system capable of tracking and recording a vessel's location at a frequency of no less than once a minute when the vessel possesses any Dungeness crab onboard, when gear is present or placed in any Fishing Zone, or when the vessel is otherwise participating in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.
- **To report violations in progress: 1-888-334-CalTIP (888-334-2258)**

Failure to comply may result in enforcement action such as suspension and or revocation of commercial fishing privileges for Dungeness crab.

CDFW Websites and Contact Information

Whale Safe Fisheries
Visit: wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries
Email: WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov

Crab fishery information
Visit: wildlife.ca.gov/crab

License and Revenue Branch:
Commercial fishing license information
Visit: wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Commercial-Fishing
Email: LRBCOMM@wildlife.ca.gov
Call: (916) 928-5822

CDFW Marine Region News
Visit: wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/Marine/News


CDFW

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