

WDFW Summary of Dungeness Crab Discussions and Actions

(Updated: May 2019)

March 19 – 1st WDFW Workshop with crab industry (low attendance):

- Information on whale entanglements in WA crab fishery, ITP process, and timeline
- Briefing on electronic monitoring (EM) options
- Review potential regulatory alternatives (gear requirements, time/area closures, derelict gear removal, and EM)

March 26 – Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations (PCFFA) settlement agreement with CDFW:

- Closed crab fishery on April 15, 2019
- Next season opens Nov 15, 2019—anticipate CDFW regulations prior to opening
- Closes fishery on April 1 each year (in specific areas) until ITP permit is issued
 - Allows “ropeless gear” in other areas until ITP permit is issued
- Requires CDFW submit ITP permit application by May 15, 2020
- Requires Risk Assessment and Management Program (RAMP) to determine closures
- “Working Group” to include CBD and PCFFA with scheduled calls with Director
- Commits NOAA to aerial surveys and whale presence criteria to determine closure

April – Conference call with NMFS Protected Resources Division:

- Discussed CBD/CDFW settlement agreement and WA Whale Working Group process
- Need for close collaboration – consider scope of ITP application and timing
- Recommend Habitat Conservation Plan training

April – Meeting with Marine Mammal Scientists (Cascadia Research), NOAA Whale Response Lead (Doug Sandilands), and Steve Jeffries

April 23 – WDFW submitted preproposal for NOAA FIS grant for EM pilot program (\$860K):

- 50-60 vessels (potential requirement for northern area)
- Contract services with Ecotrust Canada – RFID tags, camera, VMS, electronic logbook
- WDFW Scientific Technician 4 to review video and audit logbook

April 24 – 2nd Workshop with crab industry (high attendance):

- Solicited feedback on potential regulations and proposed process and timeline
- Narrowed alternatives for gear requirements, derelict gear removal, and EM and discussed timing relative to fishery operations

May 1 – Conference call with CBD – asked WDFW to:

- Commit to submitting ITP application to NMFS by specific date
 - We indicated a “target” submittal of Dec 31, 2020 (best case scenario) – CBD responded that this was “reasonable”
- Commit to CBD to implement specific regulations
 - We indicated that we needed to go through the Commission’s rulemaking process, which includes public comment, and would not circumvent that process – CBD indicated that they “understood” the need to go through the process
- Consider regulations for 2019 season
 - We indicated that the Director could consider e-reg for pot limit reduction for a portion of the summer fishery in 2019, but that the regulations through the Commission rulemaking process would not be in effect until 2020

May 20 – Legislative request briefing:

- Director Susewind and staff met with Representatives Blake and Walsh and Senator Takko and four crab fishery participants
- We provided a fact sheet and summarized the whale entanglement issue and briefed them on our proposed process and timeline
- The legislators were supportive of our efforts and asked how they could help

May 23 – Coastal Dungeness Crab Advisory Board meeting:

- WDFW staff reviewed a preliminary proposal for regulatory changes based on the discussions at the industry workshops and a proposed process and timeline, and solicited their feedback
- There was general consensus on the proposed regulatory concepts with recognition that many of the implementation details will need to be worked out as the rules are developed
- Some advisors advocated for delaying implementation until 2020 (using the proposed rulemaking process described in the schedule) while other advisors supported the Director taking emergency action for a pot limit reduction this summer