

**16. PUGET SOUND CRAB FISHERY POLICY REVIEW AND  
OPTIONS FOR THE RECREATIONAL FISHERY  
(BRIEFING AND PUBLIC HEARING)**

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**“GREEN SHEET”**

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**Meeting dates:** August 6-7, 2010, Commission Meeting

**Agenda item #16:** Puget Sound Crab Fishery Policy Review and Options for the Recreational Fishery – (Briefing/Public Hearing)

**Staff Contact:** Rich Childers, Puget Sound Shellfish Manager (Fish Program)

**Presenter/s:** Rich Childers, Puget Sound Shellfish Manager (Fish Program)

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**Background:**

In February 2000, the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) adopted its current Puget Sound Crab Fishery Policy (Policy Number C-3609, attached) that provides guidance for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s management of this fishery.

The Commission was briefed on March 11, 2010 on the Dungeness crab fishery in Puget Sound, existing management strategies, stock status trends, and a performance audit conducted by the state auditor's office. One recommendation of the audit was that "The Fish and Wildlife Commission should clarify its policy on commercial/recreational allocation. The growth in recreational crabbing activity will make it increasingly difficult for the Department to fulfill Commission policy to simultaneously maintain healthy recreational and commercial fisheries.

In response to the performance audit, and a request from the Puget Sound recreational crab advisory group to review the existing policy, the Commission provided staff with five recreational fishery season options, directed staff to develop recreational catch projections for each option, and directed staff to solicit input on these options from recreational constituents and members of the Commercial and Recreational Crab Advisory Groups.

In June 2010, the commission was briefed on constituent and advisory group recommendations regarding the five recreational fishery options and the projected catch associated with each option. As a result, the commission selected the following three options for further consideration and public comment:

Option A

Recreational fishery managed using a fixed season

- ❖ July – Labor Day
- ❖ 5 days per week, including weekends
- ❖ October – December Winter Season (7 days/week)
- ❖ 5 crab daily bag limit

Option B

Recreational fishery managed using a fixed season

- ❖ July – Labor Day
- ❖ 4 days per week, including weekends
- ❖ November – December Winter Season (7 days/week)
- ❖ 5 crab daily bag limit

Option C

Recreational fishery managed with a harvest target based on an average of recent years (2005-2009) catch

- ❖ July– Labor Day
  - ❖ 4 days per week (one weekend day)
  - ❖ Winter Season as remaining quota allows (7 days/week)
  - ❖ 5 crab daily bag limit
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Under each option, the allowable commercial fishery catch would be the difference between the nontreaty harvest share and the recreational catch.

In July 2010, the commission developed a draft Puget Sound Dungeness crab-management policy for public review and comment.

Department staff will present for commission discussion and public testimony the draft Puget Sound Crab Fishery Policy, three fishery options under consideration, and catch projections for each option.

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**Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:**

The department is soliciting Commission revisions to the draft Puget Sound Crab Fishery policy.

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

Staff met with the Puget Sound Commercial and Recreational Dungeness Crab Advisory Groups to solicit input five recreational fishery season options. The Recreational Advisors advocate for the adoption of option number two above.

The Commercial Advisors do not support any of the five recreational fishery options presented by the commission and requested the following option developed by the commercial industry be added for consideration:

Commercial Advisory Group proposed option for the recreational fishery:

- ❖ July to September summer fishery
- ❖ 4 days per week including both weekend days
- ❖ 4 crab per day limit
- ❖ Winter season ( 7 days per week) provided in Regions 1, 2E, 2W, and 3 if harvest targets have not been exceeded (See recreational harvest targets below)
- ❖ Winter season (7 days per week) provided in Regions 3-3, 4, 5, and 6 as remaining state quota allows

Recreational harvest targets:

- Increase current recreational harvest target in Region 1 (MA7) from 360,000 to 460,000 \*
- Increase current recreational harvest target in Region 2E (MA 8-1,8-2) from 350,000 to 450,000 \*
- Increase current recreational harvest target in Region 2W (MA 9) from 82,100 to 92,100 \*\*
- Increase current recreational harvest target in Region 3-1, 3-2 (MA 6) from 80,000 to 90,000 \*\*

\* If fishery exceeds a 500,000 pound threshold, the following season will be adjusted to stay within the identified harvest target.

\*\* If fishery exceeds a 100,000 pound threshold, the following season will be adjusted to stay within the identified harvest target

Staff presented the three recreational fishery options under consideration at four public meeting locations in July 2010

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**Action requested (identify the specific Commission decisions you are seeking):**

None

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**Draft motion language:**

None

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**Justification for Commission action:**

None

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**Communication Plan:**

N/A

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# FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

## *Proposed* POLICY DECISION

**POLICY TITLE: Puget Sound Crab Fishery**

**POLICY NUMBER: C-3609**

Supersedes: C-3609, effective 2/5/2000

Effective Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2010

Termination Date: (if applicable)

See Also: WAC 220-16-260

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

***Note:** the final general policy adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission will be informed by input at public meetings and at the Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting on August 7, 2010. The following examples illustrate the range of alternatives under consideration.*

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife policy direction in meeting the dual mission of preserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats while providing fish and wildlife related recreational and commercial opportunities as it relates to the Puget Sound Dungeness crab resource.

### **Definition and Intent**

This policy provides guidance for state managed fisheries of Dungeness crab (*Cancer magister*) in Washington State waters east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line (crab management regions 1-6). In establishing this policy direction for Puget Sound, the Fish and Wildlife Commission considered the state-wide harvest of Dungeness crab from the perspective of meeting the needs of the consumer, the commercial harvesters, and the recreational fishers of Washington.

### **General Policy Statement**

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) shall promote a healthy and sustainable population of Dungeness crab in Puget Sound and work cooperatively with the Tribal Co-Managers in structuring management measures to ensure a healthy and sustainable resource and achieves a fair sharing of the harvestable resource.

The management intent is to provide for meaningful and stable recreational and commercial fisheries and to focus the commercial fishery in the areas where the crab abundance is the greatest. In recognition of the small boat nature of the recreational fishery, the protected waters that Puget Sound provides small boats, and the growing interest in the Puget Sound Dungeness crab fishery, the following season structure is established as the base recreational season for Puget Sound.

[Alternative A, B, or C]

## **Policy Guidelines**

- Continue to follow the scientifically recognized best practice known as the “3-S” system for crab management. The 3-S system includes a “sex” restriction that allows only male crabs to be retained that are over the minimum “size” to protect the reproductive ability of the population, and “seasons” that protect sensitive molting periods.
- Minimize, as practical, bycatch mortalities of Dungeness crab that occurs in other fisheries
- Continue to refine the methods to provide accurate and timely estimates of the recreational and commercial catch of Dungeness crab harvests.
- Provide appropriate and timely enforcement to contribute to high regulatory compliance rates and orderly fisheries.
- Pursue communication, education, and enforcement strategies to enhance compliance with regulations pertaining to sex and size limits and the recording and reporting of catches.
- Provide easily accessible information to the public regarding the fishery rules including website information to educate the public on fishery rules, a shellfish rule hotline, and pages in the sport pamphlet devoted to information regarding the rules that govern this fishery.
- Working with stakeholders, develop and implement strategies to reduce and remove derelict crab pots and associated fishing gear.
- Recognizing the significant differences relative to the abundance of crab in each of the Department’s six crab management regions, the following policies are established for the sharing of the Dungeness crab resource within the state share of the harvestable resource pursuant to the applicable annual state-tribal management plan and U.S. v. Washington.
  - Region 1 – In priority order, provide for the recreational seasons prescribed in the General Policy (alt. 1-2-3). Provide the commercial fishery harvest opportunities beginning in the early fall time-frame and manage it in a manner that maximizes the ex-vessel value, avoids conflict with the tribal fishery, and results in a high quality product for the consumer.
  - Region 2 – In priority order, provide for the recreational seasons prescribed in the General Policy (alt. 1-2-3). Provide the commercial fishery harvest opportunities beginning in the early fall time-frame and manage it in a manner that maximizes the ex-vessel value, avoids conflict

with the tribal fishery, and results in a high quality product for the consumer. State fisheries in Port Townsend Bay will be managed for the primary benefit of the recreational fishery.

- Region 3 - In priority order, provide for the recreational seasons prescribed in the General Policy (alt. 1-2-3). Provide the commercial fishery harvest opportunities beginning in the early fall time-frame and manage it in a manner that maximizes the ex-vessel value, avoids conflict with the tribal fishery, and results in a high quality product for the consumer. State fisheries in Discovery Bay, Sequim Bay, Port Angeles Harbor, and Dungeness Bay will be managed for the primary benefit of the recreational fishery.
- Regions 4, 5, and 6 - The state fishery in these areas will be managed for the exclusive benefit of the recreational fishery. Seasons will be structured consistent with the recreational season described in the General Policy and managed to stay within the state share of the harvestable resource.



# Puget Sound Crab Management Regions

