Washington Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishing
2018 - 2019 Directive to Minimize Whale Entanglement Risk

*Recommended by the Washington Whale Entanglement Working Group**

NOAA MMHSRP # 18786

WA Commercial Dungeness Crab Vessel photo by WDFW

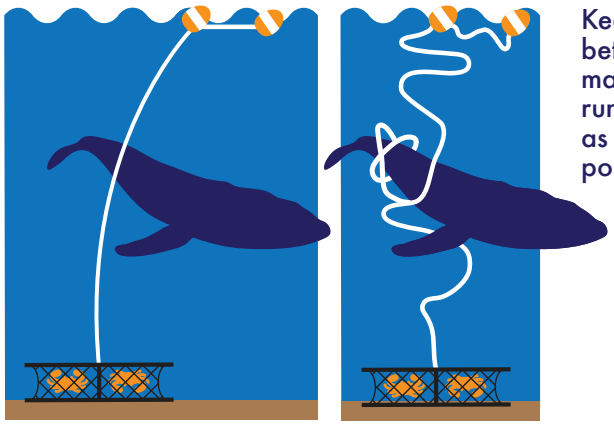
Reasons for Directives

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has confirmed significant increases in large whale entanglements over the last few years, and specifically in Dungeness crab fishing gear. This situation threatens the stability of the fishery and coastal fishing communities. By using these voluntary best practices, the Washington Dungeness crab fleet can take an important step towards reducing the risk of whale entanglements.

The best known way to reduce risk of whale entanglement is to reduce the amount of gear and line in the water during the spring and summer months, when whales are in the area.

Best Practices During Crab Season

- Laws require you to remove any fishing gear you are not actively tending during the season and have all gear out of the water by the end of the season.
- Minimize scope. Use only the amount necessary to compensate for tides, currents and weather.
- When changing set location across depths, adjust the length of pot lines by adjusting shots (i.e., measured length of line) to maintain the minimum amount of scope necessary to compensate for the currents and tides.
- Minimize excess line to avoid floating line at the surface. Floating line should be as limited as practical between the main buoy and trailer buoy(s).
- Minimize knots & splices which can get caught up in the baleen.
- Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of whales when possible. Communicate the locations of high whale activity with other fishermen.



Keep line between pot and main buoy running taut and as vertical as possible.

*Adapted from the best management directives of the Oregon Whale Entanglement Working Group

REPORT Entangled Whales IMMEDIATELY

1-877-SOS-WHALe (1-877-767-9425) or hail the U.S. Coast Guard on Channel 16

- ☑ **DO Report** Immediate reporting is critical to give the best chance for response teams to remove life-threatening gear from the whale and gather information to understand where, when and how entanglements occur to prevent future ones. Preventing future entanglements will help preserve our fishery.
- ☑ **DO Stand By** If possible please stand by and keep sight of the whale. It is difficult and rare to relocate an entangled whale if a boat does not stay with the whale. Stay at least 100 yards away.
- ☑ **DO Photograph Entangled Whales** WHALE: side view of dorsal fin (or hump); flukes (especially if underside is raised); head; any part of the body where gear may be present. ENTANGLEMENT: buoy(s); tags; lines on the body; trailing lines (including distance from whale); netting or other gear (if present); other gear if present.
- ☑ **DO Respond Promptly if Contacted** If you are contacted about a whale entangled in your gear, please respond. You can help prevent future entanglements by providing as much information as possible about your fishing gear and practices.
- ☒ **DO NOT ATTEMPT to disentangle the whale** Removing the easily accessible lines at the surface will leave the life-threatening lines attached to the whale and may make it impossible for responders to detect and remove these. Entangled whales are very rarely in immediate danger of drowning.

Recovered derelict gear

Other Things You Can Do To Help

- **Keep Gear Well Marked** All gear should be clearly marked consistent with applicable regulation. All gear should be maintained so markings are clearly legible to facilitate correct identification of the origins of the gear involved in entanglements.
- **Help Recover Lost Or Untended Gear** Obtain a free permit and help with the post-season derelict gear removal program. Any lost and untended gear contributes to marine debris and increases risk of whale entanglements.
- **Help Spread The Word** Help educate the rest of the fleet about best practices and the importance of reporting, standing by, photographing, and not trying to cut off entangling gear.

By taking these steps you will help protect whales from entanglements. You will also be helping to protect the Dungeness crab fishery and your ability to continue to harvest crab. All of us can help assure the fleet's good reputation and sustainability.

If you have questions or suggestions for reducing entanglements in fishing gear, please contact:

Photo by Doug Sandilands

Dan Ayres • WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
(360) 249-1209
daniel.ayres@dfw.wa.gov

Scott Mazzone
Quinault Indian Nation
(360) 276-8215 ext. 7576
smazzone@quinault.org

Jennifer Hagen
Quileute Tribe
(360) 374-2059
jennifer.hagen@quileutetribe.com

Joe Petersen
Makah Tribe
(360) 645-3157
makah.groundfish@gmail.com

For the Puget Sound Tribes
Sandy Zeiner • NW Indian Fisheries Commission
(360) 528-4370
szeiner@nwifc.org

Fran Recht • Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
(541) 765-2229
frecht@psmfc.org