

WDFW – European Green Crab Update

Public Update on European Green Crab Management – Nov/Dec 2022



Two invasive European green crabs removed from Grays Harbor near Westport by WDFW staff and partners in August 2022.

Report Purpose: *These regular updates are intended to inform the public, local stakeholders, news media, and others regarding the status of European green crab (EGC) management and emergency measures deployment in Washington state, supporting the public information responsibilities of the Incident Command System (ICS) and Public Information Officer (PIO).*

For additional information, please see: wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/invasive/carcinus-maenas European green crab news, communications and outreach materials are available under the Resources tab.

To report European green crab sightings or obtain identification resources, visit: wdfw.wa.gov/greencrab

November/December 2022 Updates

European Green Crab Incident Command objectives continue to include reduction of EGC populations to below levels harmful to environmental, economic, or cultural resources.

This report summarizes European green crab (EGC) captures, monitoring, and other emergency measures from November and early December 2022, as well as field and partner highlights.

Many shore-based EGC trapping efforts are ending for the season or being significantly reduced for safety reasons due to shortened daylight hours, difficulty in tidal timing, and hazardous intertidal and weather conditions. WDFW seasonal technical staff have also finished their seasonal positions, so WDFW is shifting to developing and testing boat-based trapping opportunities to support year-round trapping needs. Read on for additional updates and highlights.

2022 European Green Crab Capture/Removal Totals

Total **269,579** as of November 30*
Latest Operational Period **21,707** (Nov. 1 to 30, 2022)

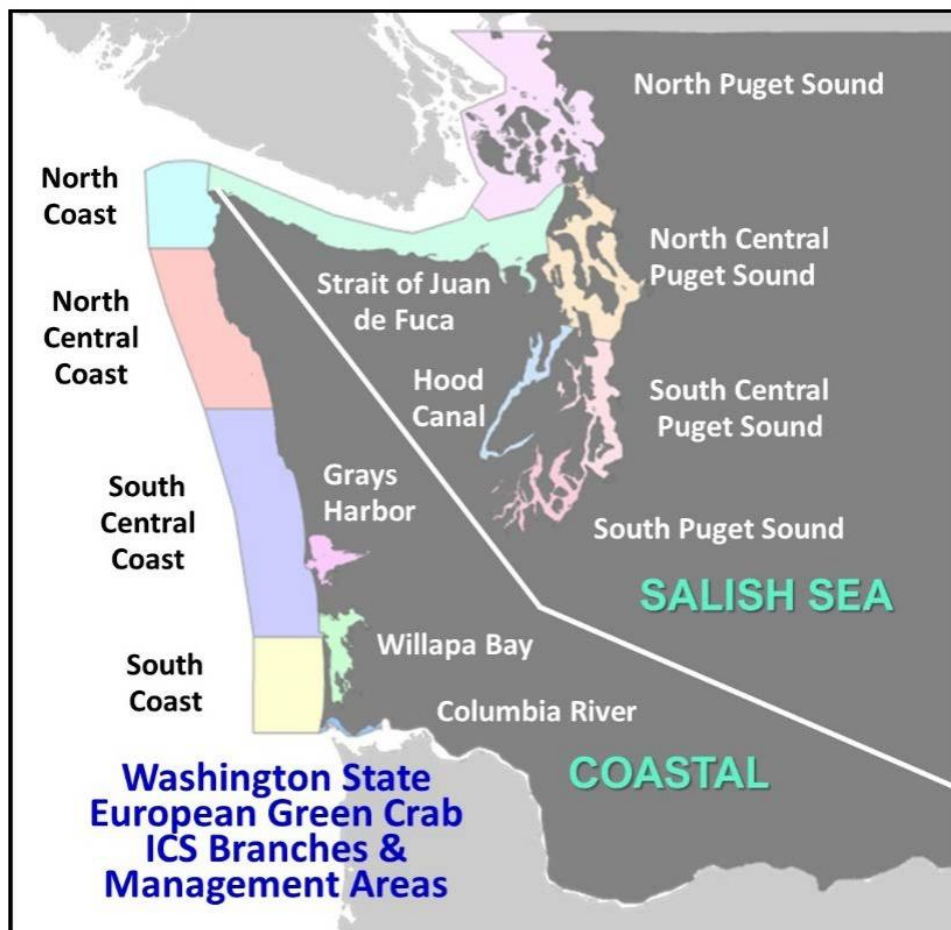
Coastal Management Branch EGC removal totals:

Year to date 188,901
 Latest Operational Period 19,804

Salish Sea Management Branch EGC removal totals:

Year to date 80,678
 Latest Operational Period 1,903

**WDFW is no longer including EGC removal data for specific areas in public reports in the interest of consistency. The high number of European green crab removed in 2022 reflects the coordinated deployment of significantly increased personnel, equipment, and other capture effort by WDFW, Native American tribes, shellfish growers, federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Read on for additional updates.*



10-Day Emergency Measures Status Update to the Governor

(December 29, 2022): Per RCW 77.135.090, the WDFW Director continues to evaluate the effects of the European Green Crab emergency measures as provided under Proclamation 22-02, finds that the emergency continues to persist, and advises that all emergency measures should be continued. Details of the evaluation will be provided directly to you in Situation Reports (SitReps) issued every two weeks reflecting each Incident Command System operational period.

November/December News and Media Coverage Highlights

Coverage from state, local, and national outlets included:

- Skagit Valley Herald ran a piece on soaring EGC numbers in Washington and wrapping up this year's trapping season: **Invasive green crab numbers soar, trapping efforts wrapping up**
https://www.goskagit.com/townnews/hydrography/invasive-green-crab-numbers-soar-trapping-efforts-wrapping-up/article_1b79b400-5487-11ed-ac44-935a5096b261.html
- KING 5 wrote an article on trapping for EGC in Samish Bay: **Invasive crab threatening shellfish industry, salmon found in another western Washington bay**
<https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/european-green-crab-found-in-skagit-county-samish-bay/281-f14cd761-15b0-4bf9-baf4-89d9a38f3990>
- Sierra Magazine published a piece on the history of the EGC invasion in Washington and its status: **European Green Crab Populations Are Exploding in Washington State**
<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/european-green-crab-populations-are-exploding-washington-state>
- FOX 13 ran an article following the Oct EGC Public Update: **WDFW: Nearly 250,000 invasive European green crabs removed from Washington waters**
<https://www.q13fox.com/news/wdfw-nearly-250000-invasive-european-green-crabs-removed-from-washington-waters>
- KUOW reported on the work that has been done by partners to control EGC in 2022: **Invasive crab population keeps booming in Washington**
<https://www.kuow.org/stories/invasive-crab-population-booming-in-washington>
- KPUG picked up the FOX 13 story and ran a similar article: **New report highlights invasive green crab population in Washington waters**
<https://kpug1170.com/news/007700-new-report-highlights-invasive-green-crab-population-in-washington-waters/>
- KGMI also published a similar article: **New report highlights invasive green crab population in Washington waters**



<https://kgmi.com/news/007700-new-report-highlights-invasive-green-crab-population-in-washington-waters/>

- Undercurrent News ran an article on the progress Washington is making to control EGC: **Washington state making good progress in stemming green crab invasion**
<https://www.undercurrentnews.com/2022/11/30/washington-state-making-good-progress-in-stemming-green-crab-invasion/>
- The Daily World published an article on the status of EGC in Willapa Bay: **Invasive green crab booming in Willapa Bay**
<https://www.thedailyworld.com/news/invasive-green-crab-booming-in-willapa-bay/>
- KXRO also provided their readers with information from the Oct/Nov EGC Public Update: **Latest European green crab updates**
<https://www.kxro.com/latest-european-green-crab-updates/>
- Tacoma Daily Index published an article about EGC in Washington and ways to get involved with WDFW: **Green crab invasion**
<https://www.tacomadailyindex.com/blog/green-crab-invasion/2462861/>
- KUOW provided another update on the status of EGC to their audiences: **Green crabs are not giving Washington a break: Today So Far**
<https://www.kuow.org/stories/green-crabs-are-not-giving-washington-a-break-today-so-far>
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service posted a piece about “jacks”—smaller, early-returning salmon—and explained how their carcasses are being used as bait for EGC: **An ode to jacks**
<https://www.fws.gov/story/2022-12/ode-jacks>

Partner Highlight: State grant program provides funding to coastal partners for European green crab control

Washington state coastal stakeholders have been working to control the spread of invasive European green crabs (EGC) since at least 2020. Until this year, there was very little financial support available.

Recognizing the importance of their work, **in 2022 the Washington State Legislature appropriated \$675,000 to be distributed by WDFW to coastal partners working on EGC control through the Coastal Management Grant Program – European Green Crab.** The grant program is part of the state’s EGC emergency measures funding. So far, funding has been



distributed to the Pacific Conservation District, Grays Harbor Conservation District, and the Pacific Shellfish Institute.

The Pacific Conservation District has distributed much of their grant funding for EGC trapping to Pacific County Vegetation Management and local shellfish growers. Shellfish growers trapping for green crabs include Willapa-Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association, which represents shellfish growers in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor, and Willapa Bay Oyster. Between April and November 2022 these groups caught more than 140,000 EGC. This is at least 69% of all EGC caught in that area during that time.

“The shellfish farmers have long been at the forefront of environmental issues including spartina, zostera japonica, burrowing shrimp, and now European green crab,” said David Beugli, Executive Director of Willapa-Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association. “We understand that protecting the bays and preserving a healthy ecosystem is vital to our farms' survival. The removal of European green crabs is a continuation of this environmental stewardship, and we will not stop until they are eradicated.”

Many of the grant-funded groups are working with other partners on the coast to maximize efforts at EGC removal. These partners include the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe, WDFW, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Total efforts have led to removal of more than 180,000 EGC from Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay this year.

The other two grantees are gearing up for 2023. Grays Harbor Conservation District is building capacity and adding partners for a larger trapping effort in Grays Harbor. Meanwhile, the Pacific Shellfish Institute will be starting a study in January on how EGC can impact shellfish in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor. The findings of the study will help inform best management practices going forward.

All \$675,000 will be allocated to coastal partners for the 2023 Fiscal Year, which runs through June 2023. WDFW has requested additional funding for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 and anticipates at least \$500,000 per year to be allocated to the EGC Coastal Management Grant Program. Shellfish aquaculture businesses, county or city governments, tribes, nonprofit groups, and other local entities are eligible to receive funding through this program for EGC trapping and control. Contact ais@dfw.wa.gov to learn more.

Field Highlight: Live European green crabs confiscated from seafood market; species remains prohibited in Washington

In early December WDFW Police received information that a Seattle market was selling live “green crabs”. Fish and Wildlife Officers Trent Weidert and Nick Libbing went to investigate.

It was determined that the retail market had bought approximately 30 pounds of live green crabs from a distributor in Massachusetts with the intent of selling them for use in crab stock and soup.



Marketed only as “green crabs”, the seller did not appear to know that they were in fact European green crabs (EGC) regulated by Washington state as a prohibited invasive species.

The seller was very cooperative with Officer Libbing and the crabs were confiscated and destroyed. WDFW Police and Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) unit staff are working to increase outreach to local seafood sellers and shippers regarding the state’s invasive species regulations, how they can find out which species are Prohibited, and what they need to do for sale under [WAC 220-640-051](#).

Further investigation into the Massachusetts seafood distributor continues, including contact with Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game wardens about possible ramifications for interstate trafficking of live invasive species, and whether they were sold to other Pacific Northwest states or provinces.

Under the state's ongoing emergency order, Washington’s EGC Incident Command objectives include reduction of green crab populations to levels which are not harmful to environmental, economic, or cultural resources. At this time commercial or recreational markets for European green crabs would be detrimental to these objectives.

Invasive species sold for food or fishing bait are sometimes released (intentionally or unintentionally) and are known to be among the causes of their spread in other states and regions. In Washington, European green crabs are not currently found within central or south Puget Sound and should not be introduced anywhere in the state.

European green crabs are classified as a [Prohibited Level 1](#) Invasive Species in Washington, meaning they may not be possessed, introduced on or into a water body or property, or trafficked (transported, bought or sold), without WDFW authorization.

This event is an important reminder of the regulations around European green crab and the responsibility of seafood sellers, buyers and shippers to avoid potentially spreading them.

Thank you and great job, WDFW Police, especially Officers Weidert and Libbing for their work on this case!

Photos and Multimedia Highlight

Photos of live European green crab confiscated from a Seattle seafood seller in early December by WDFW Police Officer Nicholas Libbing.





General Updates

European Green Crab Quarterly Progress Report – Fall 2022

The European Green Crab Quarterly Progress Report – Fall 2022 was published and submitted to the Washington State Legislature on Dec. 1. View it at: wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02355

European Green Crab Management Update (one-pager)

A new one-page factsheet providing a summary of European green crab management in 2022 was shared with Governor Jay Inslee’s office and published online on Dec. 12. View it at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/egcupdate121322.pdf>

Fiscal Year 2023-2025 Biennium Budget (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024)

WDFW EGC funding received from the legislature in this biennium is ongoing for the 2023-2025 biennium. At this time, WDFW is not seeking additional legislative EGC funding, and the assumption is status quo distribution of funds as issued for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, but WDFW will assess options for adjusting dispersal based on availability of alternative funding sources and any changes to EGC emergency management priority and resource needs. Starting in January 2023, WDFW will solicit budget/funding feedback from tribal co-managers and through entity representatives of the EGC Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group.

European Green Crab Multi-Agency Coordination Group



The European Green Crab (EGC) Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MAC Group) met virtually on Nov. 16 and again on Dec. 7. The MAC Group members provided agency updates and addressed previously identified priority gaps and leads. An outreach proposal, “Citizen Engagement in European Green Crab Early Detection,” was submitted by Washington State University and University of Washington and voted on by the members of the MAC Group. The proposal was accepted with no dissenting votes. Of \$1.1 million available through Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) EGC interagency agreements available in FY 2023, approximately \$118,344 remains unobligated.

Communications, outreach, and community events

Jessica Ostfeld was hired as WDFW’s European Green Crab Outreach Specialist. She will ramp up public education and community engagement efforts, coordinating with the Public Information Officer (Chase Gunnell) and ICS/AIS staff to support EGC communications, outreach, and events.

Please contact WDFW’s EGC Outreach Specialist jessica.ostfeld@dfw.wa.gov to request signs, stickers, or materials, or to request attendance at events or outreach opportunities.

WDFW AIS and Communications staff joined Washington Sea Grant and Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission booths at the 2022 Pacific Marine Expo at Lumen Field Event Center Nov. 17-19. Staff talked with more than 120 people about EGC, passing out stickers, fliers, and other outreach materials. EGC identification signs were also distributed to local shellfish growers and commercial fishers, NOAA staff, and several other groups at the event.

WDFW shared green crab [ID information](#), [fliers/signs](#), [stickers](#), and other resources with private shellfish growers and tidelands owners, WDFW shellfish biologists and partners, Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission, Washington Invasive Species Council/RCO, and other organizations.

Public Reporting and Crab Identification

WDFW continues to receive reports from the public of native crab species misidentified for invasive European green crabs. While we appreciate the public interest in helping to identify invasive species, **these incidents are examples of why WDFW calls on the public to photograph and report suspected green crabs at: wdfw.wa.gov/greencrab**, returning the crab in question unharmed to the water where it was found. Most of these native crabs, including Graceful, Kelp, and Hairy shore crabs, are regulated as Unclassified Marine Invertebrates and are illegal to kill, harvest, retain, or possess. If verified as European green crabs, WDFW will follow up with trapping and monitoring if found in a new area

Crab identification guides and resources are also available on that [webpage](#), as well as a flier at: https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/European_green_crab_reporting_sign_2022.jpg

European green crabs are shore crabs and are found in shallow areas—typically less than 25 feet of water—including estuaries, mudflats, intertidal zones, and beaches. They are not likely to be caught by recreational shrimpers or crabbers operating in deeper water, but may be encountered by beachgoers, waders, clam and oyster harvesters, or those crabbing off docks or piers in shallow areas.



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Summary Statement for Background

On January 19, 2022, Washington State Governor Inslee issued Emergency Proclamation 22-02 which ordered the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) “to begin implementation of emergency measures as necessary to effect the eradication of or to prevent the permanent establishment and expansion of European green crab.” This is a statewide proclamation for all marine and estuarine waters of the state that to be effective, will require coordination across state, tribal, and federal jurisdictions. To address this large and complex task, WDFW has implemented an Incident Command System (ICS) structure to facilitate a statewide European green crab (EGC) management strategy. The state Emergency Management Division has assigned this as Mission #22-1085. Since this is a relatively slower-moving emergency (as compared to earthquake or wildfire response), the ICS structure will be used as the overall framework for WDFW communications and coordination.

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Public updates on European Green Crab Management are posted at:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/invasive/carcinus-maenas>

For more information or for media inquiries, please contact the European Green Crab Public Information Officer at chase.gunnell@dfw.wa.gov or contact ais@dfw.wa.gov.

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