



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

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January 18, 2024

WASHINGTON COASTAL DUNGENESS CRAB INDUSTRY NOTICE

Season Opening Coastwide in Washington

The Washington coastal Dungeness crab fishery will open from the WA – Oregon Border to the US – Canada Border (excluding Special Management Areas), including the Columbia River, Willapa Bay, and Grays Harbor to state fishers on February 1, 2024, with a reduced pot limit coastwide at the start of the season. Details for the opening are as follows:

- 73-hour presoak begins (setting gear): 8:00 AM on January 29, 2024
- Hold Inspections: beginning at 12:00 PM on January 31, 2024
- Start date (pulling gear): 9:00 AM on February 1, 2024

On January 5, 2024, Tri-state managers agreed to delay the season opening north of Cape Falcon, OR until February 1, 2024, based on the results of the Long Beach test fishery. More information about the decision can be found in a prior notice: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/20240105-industry-notice-season-south-opener.pdf>.

The season opening between Point Chehalis, WA and the US – Canada Border was made in coordination with tribal co-managers. The State-Quinault Harvest Management Plan for the 2023-2024 season uses a sliding scale based on landings during the first 31 days of the Quinault fishery to determine the head-start for the Quinault fleet. In accordance with this agreement, co-managers agree to a 49-day delay of the state fishery in the area from Point Chehalis north to Destruction Island, resulting in a February 1st opener. The season opener north of Destruction Island was made in accordance with the State-Quileute Harvest Management Plan. WDFW and Quileute managers agree to a head-start for the Quileute fleet based on weather criteria and a minimum delay until January 15th for the state fleet. To avoid imposing fair start criteria and to distribute fishing effort, WDFW managers have made the decision to align the opening north of Destruction Island with the rest of the Washington coast on February 1, 2024.

POT LIMITS:

All fishers participating in the fishery from the WA – OR border to the US – Canada Border, including the Columbia River, Willapa Bay, and Grays Harbor, are subject to reduced pot limits effective at the start of the season. Fishers with permanent pot limits of 500 or 300 will be allowed to use 400 or 250 pots, respectively.

A pot reduction at the start of the 2023-24 season is being implemented in response to pre-season indicators of high crab abundance, including catch by the Quinault fleet during their first 31 days. State policy representatives are utilizing this management tool to address harvest sharing opportunity within the Quinault U&A. To ease crowding concerns outside of the Quinault U&A, pot restrictions have been implemented coastwide for the first 30 days.

In Washington waters south of Point Chehalis and north of Destruction Island a reduced pot limit of 400/250 will be in place until 8:00 AM March 2, 2024. A pot limit of 400/250 in the area between Point Chehalis and Destruction Island will be in place until further notice. WDFW managers will continue to monitor indicators of crab abundance and make adjustments as necessary. Unused buoy tags must be on board the vessel and available for inspection until temporary pot limits are lifted. Storing or possessing crab pots on board any participating vessel in excess of the vessels pot limit is prohibited.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS (SMA):

Quinault SMA:

The Quinault primary SMA will be closed to non-treaty fishers beginning at 8:00 AM February 1, 2024. The primary SMA is scheduled to remain closed to non-treaty fishers until further notice.

The Quinault primary SMA is described as the coastal waters shoreward of a line approximating the 27-fathom depth curve between Raft River (47°28.00) and Copalis River (47°08.00) according to the following coordinates:

- Northeast Corner (Raft River): 47°28.00' N. Lat. 124°20.70' W. Lon.
- Northwest Corner: 47°28.00' N. Lat. 124°34.00' W. Lon.
- Southwest Corner: 47°08.00' N. Lat. 124°25.50' W. Lon.
- Southeast Corner (Copalis River): 47°08.00' N. Lat. 124°11.20' W. Lon.

The Quileute SMA

The Quileute SMA will be closed to state fishers beginning at 8:00 AM February 1, 2024. The SMA is schedule to remain closed to state fishers until 8:00 AM, May 1, 2024.

The Quileute SMA is described as the area from Cape Johnson to Destruction Island shoreward of a line approximating 30 fathoms according to the following points:

- Northeast Corner (Cape Johnson): 47°58.00' N. Lat. 124°40.40' W. Lon.
- Northwest Corner: 47°58.00' N. Lat. 124°49.00' W. Lon.
- Southwest Corner: 47°40.50' N. Lat. 124°40.00' W. Lon.
- Southeast Corner (Destruction Island): 47°40.50' N. Lat. 124°24.43' W. Lon.

There will be a 100-pot limit in the SMA from May 1, 2024 through May 31, 2024. Fishers will be required to pre-register with WDFW prior to deploying gear in this area.

The Makah SMA

The Makah SMA will be closed to non-treaty fishers beginning at 8:00 AM February 1, 2024. The SMA is scheduled to remain closed to state fishers until 8:00 AM March 2, 2024.

The SMA is described as the coastal waters between 48°02.15 N' Lat. to 48°19.50 N' Lat. east of a line connecting those points approximating the 25-fathom line according to the following coordinates:

- Northeast Corner: Tatoosh Island
- Northwest Corner: 48°19.50' N. Lat. 124°50.45' W. Lon.
- Southwest Corner: 48°02.15' N. Lat. 124°50.45' W. Lon.
- Southeast Corner: 48°02.15' N. Lat. 124°41.00' W. Lon.

There will be a 200-pot limit in the SMA for the first 30-days following the opening of the SMA to state fishers. Fishers will be required to pre-register with WDFW prior to deploying gear in this area.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING:

On Oct. 27, 2023, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission approved the adoption of new rules that require coastal Dungeness crab fishery participants to have an operational electronic monitoring (EM) system, effective January 1, 2024. When participating in the WA coastal Dungeness crab fishery, vessels must have a functioning EM system installed and transmitting data 24/7; this requirement is also in effect for dual permit holders when fishing within Oregon waters or landing into Oregon ports if WA crab gear is set. AIS and VMS systems commonly used in federal fisheries **do not** satisfy this requirement. A complete description of the rules and system requirements (WAC 220-340-420) can be found at the following link: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=220-340-420>

Vessel operators must submit an activation report to WDFW after they have installed an EM system, purchased a data plan and prior to setting gear. Activation reports can be found at the following link: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/electronic-monitoring#activation>

WDFW staff will send confirmation to vessel operators that the EM system is transmitting after the activation report has been received.

FAIR START PROVISIONS:

Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-340-400) in the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the waters between Cape Falcon, Oregon (45°46.00) and Point Arena, CA are subject to the Fair Start Provisions described below.

- Cape Falcon, OR to the US – Canada Border: Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-340-400) in the area between Point Arena, CA and Cape Falcon, OR before the area between Cape Falcon and the US – Canada Border opens will not be allowed to fish in this area until 8:00 am March 2, 2024.
- WAC 220-340-400 Definition—Commercial crab fishing: “Commercial crab fishing” means any taking, fishing, use, or operation of gear to fish for crab for commercial purposes and includes the possession of crab on the water for commercial purposes, and the landing or initial delivery of crab for commercial purposes.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

- A hold inspection certificate number is required on all fish tickets **until March 2, 2024**.
- Each crab pot must be rigged with line that is marked with 12 inches of continuous red in at least two places. At a minimum, 12 inches of continuous line must be marked in red, no more than one fathom from the main buoy and no more than one fathom from the pot. WAC 220-340-430 (6ii)
- License owners **MUST** register one unique buoy color scheme per coastal crab license with WDFW. License owners must complete buoy registration **annually** before fishing. If this is your first time registering buoys for the commercial WA Dungeness crab fishery, contact Jamie Fuller at 360-580-0875 to verify your color scheme is available. Buoy registration must be completed using the WDFW online registration form. It requires that you use a smartphone or tablet to take photos of your buoys. To access the registration form visit: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/1a6ae9a42a7342d4884f63a089968aa9>. If you do not have a smartphone or are unable to complete the registration, contact Jamie Fuller at 360-580-0875 or Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov.

- No deliveries of crab caught south of Cape Falcon will be allowed into any ports north of the Columbia River except the ports of Ilwaco and Chinook, until 8:00 am February 1, 2024. Vessels must adhere to ODFW's closed area transit allowance requirements.
- A Washington Gear Transfer Permit issued by WDFW is required to transport through Washington State waters, crab pots or buoys bearing the tags issued by another state. Contact Sgt. Brian Alexander 360-580-6200 for issuance of this permit.
- WDFW would like your help, please call the WDFW Police Dispatch WildCom Center at (360) 902-2936 (option 1) if you witness or have information regarding enforcement violations including fishing in closed areas, starting early, pots without buoy tags, etc.

If you have any questions pertaining to this notice, contact Jamie Fuller at Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov or 360-580-0875 or Matt George at Matthew.George@dfw.wa.gov or 360-640-1066