

Invasive European green crab



European green crabs threaten West Coast economies, environments, and tribal, cultural, and commercial resources

Federal funding and reinstatement of NOAA's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species are requested to combat European green crabs.

The European green crab is considered one of the world's worst invasive species. These shore crabs feed on clams, mussels, and other native shellfish. They can compete with Dungeness crabs and impact resources that are part of the cultural identity of tribes and native peoples as well as affect small businesses and low-income rural communities.

While digging for their next meal, European green crabs can also destroy habitats that salmon rely on such as estuaries and eelgrass beds. This could hinder salmon and Southern Resident killer whale recovery efforts, reduce shorebird food supplies, and ultimately affect the overall health and resiliency of the Salish Sea and outer coast waters.

An invasive species emergency in Washington state

European green crabs were detected in California in 1989 and have since spread up the West Coast as far as Alaska. They were discovered on the Washington coast in 1998 and in inland waters near Puget Sound in 2016. Beginning around 2018, significant increases in the invasive crabs were detected, potentially linked to warmer waters.

Washington state has since taken national leadership on managing the European green crab's impacts, which are still at early stages of invasion in our state. As part of this leadership, Washington Governor Jay Inslee and several tribes issued emergency proclamations in 2022 recognizing the threats posted by European green crabs and directing state agencies and partners to coordinate emergency measures to control them, led by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

With funding from the state legislature, more than **361,000 European green crabs were removed from Washington waters in 2023** by WDFW, Native American tribes, shellfish growers, and other agencies and partners.

Yet federal funding levels are insufficient to address the scope of this emergency as evidenced by the state providing state funding to support federally recognized tribes, Washington Sea Grant, and federal agencies to conduct green crab research and protect national wildlife refuges.

We request that Congress and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recognize the emergency nature and destructive potential of European green crab on the West Coast by providing funding as detailed on the following page.

Contact information:

Meagan West

Federal Policy Coordinator
meagan.west@dfw.wa.gov

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European green crab federal funding request



Request for federal funding and support for West Coast green crab response

We respectfully request that Congress recognize the emergency nature and destructive potential of European green crab, support Washington and other states' initiatives to combat this species, and act to minimize this destruction by implementing the following requests:

- Fund the reestablishment of the Office of Aquatic Invasive Species at NOAA headquarters to support state, tribal, and federal European green crab management programs.
- **Appropriate \$5 million in fiscal year 2024 and future years to the Coastal Aquatic Invasive Species Mitigation Grant Program** as authorized under the Frank LoBiondo Vessel Incidental Discharge Act of 2018.
- Provide funding for European green crab prevention, management, and data stewardship to:
 - \$300,000 to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Willapa National Wildlife Refuge and Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge
 - \$800,000 to U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Threats and Invasive Species Research Program for its Western Fisheries Research Center and Alaska Science Center
 - \$8 million to Bureau of Indian Affairs' Invasive Species Program for its Northwest Region
 - Funding to U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service for Washington's coastal shellfish growers who have been impacted by European green crabs.

European green crab detections in Washington state in 2023



Graphic showing how to identify invasive European green crabs emphasizing the five spines. Photo: WDFW

More information is available online at wdfw.wa.gov/greencrab

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Request this information in an alternative format or language at wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/requests-accommodation, 833-885-1012, TTY (711), or CivilRightsTeam@dfw.wa.gov.