



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

Meeting date:

10/21/2024 Fish Committee and 10/25/2024 Fish and Wildlife Commission

Agenda item:

Coastal Dungeness Crab Policy C-3604

Presenter(s):

Lorna Wargo, Intergovernmental Ocean Policy Coordinator, IOP

Heather Hall, Region 6 Director

Background Summary

The Commission is considering updates to the policy that serves as the framework for coastal Dungeness crab management. Department management of the coastal Dungeness crab fishery has been well served for 25 years by this policy. While the policy remains robust to meeting conservation and management needs of the fishery, updates are warranted to incorporate guidance on three emergent issues: 1) the need to seek an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) and complete a Conservation Plan pursuant to the ESA to address risk from entanglements in the coastal Dungeness crab fishery with a focus on humpback whales, blue whales, and leatherback sea turtles; 2) add language to recognize recreational fishery management and engagement; and, 3) support for work to inform climate-related fishery resiliency measures.

In September the Commission approved a [revised version of the policy](#) for public review. [A formal comment period was open from October 2 through October 15, 2024](#) and a public townhall noticed via a news release was held on October 15, 2024. At this meeting, Department staff will present a summary of the public comment received through the comment portal, by email, and at the townhall, and a timeline for anticipated next steps.

Staff recommendation: N/A

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

In updating the policy, the Commission signals support for and guidance to the Department to pursue and implement management strategies that address the identified emergent needs consistent with the mandate to preserve, perpetuate, and protect the resource and provide for sustainable commercial and recreational opportunity.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation: None

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

A public comment period was open from October 2, 2024 through October 15, 2024 allowing interested parties to provide input on proposed updates through a WDFW website portal. Additionally, a virtual public townhall meeting was held on October 15, 2024. At the townhall staff presented information on the coastal Dungeness crab fishery, described the proposed policy revisions, and solicited comments and feedback from attendees. Previously, staff met with the Coastal Dungeness Crab Advisory Board on July 22 and August 22 to brief them on the purpose and need for the action and to share draft policy language for discussion. All Washington coastal crab fishery license holders and alternate operators received the draft policy in writing in advance of a public meeting held on September 5, 2024.

Feedback during the comment period included support for the revised policy and comments raising specific points of concern regarding whale entanglement – whether the policy was comprehensive enough or needed at all and similarly whether consideration of climate resiliency measures was useful. Other input addressed more general issues related to crab fisheries.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Staff ask the Commission for approval to proceed, anticipating returning in December for a final decision.

Draft motion language: N/A

Post decision communications plan:

The revised policy will be posted on the Commission’s policy page on the WDFW website following a final decision. The final policy will also be distributed to stakeholders and shared in the annual Coastal Dungeness crab newsletter.
