



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

February 4, 2025

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery Participant:

This letter provides you information about proposed changes to regulations affecting Washington's coastal and Puget Sound crab fisheries and your opportunity to comment on the changes. These changes will impact the 2025-2026 fishing season and beyond.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has implemented measures to reduce the risk of entanglement of marine life which are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA). To build on these efforts, WDFW proposes revisions to coastal Dungeness crab regulations, including:

- Limiting the length and amount of surface gear
- Expanding the current gear marking requirements for surface trailer and main vertical lines

Along with these, administrative changes are proposed to streamline and clarify existing shellfish fishery regulations on the coast and in Puget Sound.

Public Town Hall Meeting: WDFW staff will host a virtual meeting to present the proposed changes and gather public comment.

- **Date:** February 26, 2025
- **Time:** 5pm
- Register for Zoom meeting here:
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_asl3pdztRICDmcSApCbqrQ

Proposed Rule: To review the proposed regulatory language and economic impact analysis refer to the CR-102 and draft compliance guide available on the WDFW Rules Information Center webpage:
[Commercial Dungeness Crab | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Review: The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission will review these proposed changes during its **March 20-22, 2025**, meeting in Kennewick, WA. This meeting will be held in person and online via a Zoom Webinar. Public comment will be taken at the meeting.

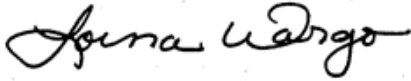
You can also provide feedback until **March 24, 2025** through:

- **Website:** [Coastal and Puget Sound Commercial Dungeness Crab Rule CR-102 - PublicInput](#)
- **Email:** commercialcrabrules@publicinput.com
- **Voicemail:** 855-925-2801 (Project Code 11027)

Please note that meeting schedules and agenda may change. Updates and additional information will be posted on the Commission web page: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/meetings.html>. For questions or special accommodations, contact the Commission office at (360) 902-226, TDD (360) 902-2207.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact Lorna Wargo at 360-581-5611 or Lorna.Wargo@dfw.wa.gov or Megan Hintz at 564-215-1757 or Megan.Hintz@dfw.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Lorna L. Wargo
Intergovernmental Ocean Policy Coordinator



Megan Hintz
Fisheries Conservation Planner

cc: Dan Chadwick
Heather Hall
Matt George
Aaron Dufault

Summary of Proposed Regulation Changes

Comprehensive line marking in the Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery (WAC 220-340-430)

Proposed changes would require that line marking must be sufficient to identify the line as being exclusive to the coastal Dungeness crab fishery with dual-colored state fishery specific manufactured line or sets of solid marks with a phased implementation. With rule adoption, for the 2025-2026 fishing season the current continuous 12-inch red mark within one fathom of the buoy would be required and all trailer/surface line must be marked. Beginning with the 2028-2029 season the uppermost 15 fathoms of the main vertical line must be marked. These changes advance the intended purpose of line marking to increase gear visibility in marine mammal entanglements and thus traceability to the fishery.

Surface gear limitations in the Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery (WAC 220-340-430)

Proposed rule changes would limit the overall length of surface gear to no more than 36 feet of line and limit the number of buoys to no more than three which includes the main(diver) buoy and up to two trailer buoys. A small end marker buoy is permissible and does not count towards the total. This proposed measure limits the length of surface gear allowed on each pot to reduce entanglement risk.

Prohibition to register or use buoy brand required by a treaty tribal fishery in the Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery (WAC 220-340-430)

Proposed changes would prohibit a buoy brand required by a treaty tribal fishery to be used or registered for the non-treaty Coastal Dungeness Crab fishery. The effect of the proposed rule is to not allow fishers to use buoy brands used in a treaty tribal fishery to support the traceability of entangled gear to the non-treaty fishery.

Prohibit the use of line marks or colors required in another fishery (WAC 220-340-430)

Proposed changes would prohibit the use of line marks or manufactured color combinations in Washington commercial crab fisheries that are required for other West Coast state or federal fisheries. The effect of the proposed rule change is to disallow fishers to use line marked or manufactured to marking specifications required in another fishery and to further support the traceability of line in marine life entanglements to the fishery of origin. Line marking prohibitions were adopted for all other Washington fixed gear fisheries in prior rulemaking; the proposed changes expand the prohibition to the commercial Dungeness crab fisheries for consistency and comprehensive coverage.

Administrative Changes

Update language in commercial crab fisheries to describe what is lawful (WAC 220-340-430)

Proposed changes would shift from language that described what is unlawful to language that describes what is required with regards to buoy brand registration and coastal line marking requirements. The effect of the change is to improve clarity regarding what action is required for compliance.

Designated operator in commercial crab fisheries is responsible for compliance (WAC 220-340-430)

Proposed changes would clarify the natural person who is responsible for compliance with regulations. Changes shift responsibility from the license holder to the designated vessel operator for buoy brand registration and fishing with buoys not registered. Changes clarify the vessel operator is responsible for using only the amount of line reasonably necessary, where the current rule does not specify a responsible party.

Clarify buoy registration requirements (WAC 220-340-430)

Proposed changes would clarify that required annual buoy brand and color combinations must be completed prior to fishing each season. Existing rules require the registration of a unique buoy color scheme and buoy brand each season, but do not specify when in the season registration is required. Additionally, proposed rule changes would clarify that buoys fished under a single license must be uniformly marked with the buoy brand number submitted during registration.