Coastal Dungeness Crab Advisory Group Meeting

March 12, 2025

10:00 am

Washington Department of FISH and WILDLIFE

Agenda

Time	Topic	Presenter
10:00 – 10:10 AM	Introductions	Heather Hall
10:20 – 10:40 AM	Take Reduction Team (TRT) Overview	Heather Hall
10:40 – 10:50 PM	Ropeless Gear Discussion	Megan Hintz
10:50 – 11:40 PM	Current proposed rule changes	Megan Hintz
11:40 – 12:00 PM	Catch update	Matt George
12:00 – 12:30 PM	Next Steps/Public Comment	

Take Reduction Team (TRT)

West Coast Take Reduction Team (TRT)

Reminder

Preliminary **Scope**

- Species: Central America humpback whales, Mexico humpback whales, North Pacific blue whales
- Fisheries: Federal sablefish pot, CA Dungeness crab pot, OR Dungeness crab pot, WA coastal commercial Dungeness crab pot, CA spot prawn pot

Goal

- Reduce mortality and serious injury (M/SI) below each stocks Potential Biological Removal (PBR)

TRT Members

- State fisheries managers, Federal, Scientists, Conservationists (NGOs), Fishery participants
- Develop a Take Reduction Plan of regulatory and voluntary measures such as gear modifications, modifications to fisheries practices, and fishery closures within 6 months

Tentatively: June – November 2025

TRT Updates

Pre-meeting has been <u>postponed</u>

- Originally scheduled for March 31-April 4
- New dates are TBD

TRT Members

- NOAA has not provided any information on if members have been selected

Tentative meeting dates

- Meeting 1: June 2 - 6, 2025
- Meeting 2: July 28 - August 1, 2025
- Meeting 3: September 29 - October 3, 2025
- Meeting 4: November 3 - 7, 2025

What we need from industry during this process

Ropeless Gear Research

On going questions and data needs

- We hired a specialist – Chris Biggs
  - Study crab population and fishery
  - Predict abundance and distribution
  - Investigate predictors of co-occurrence of fishing gear and whales

- Alternative fishing gears
  - Longlining
  - Ropeless / on-demand fishing gear

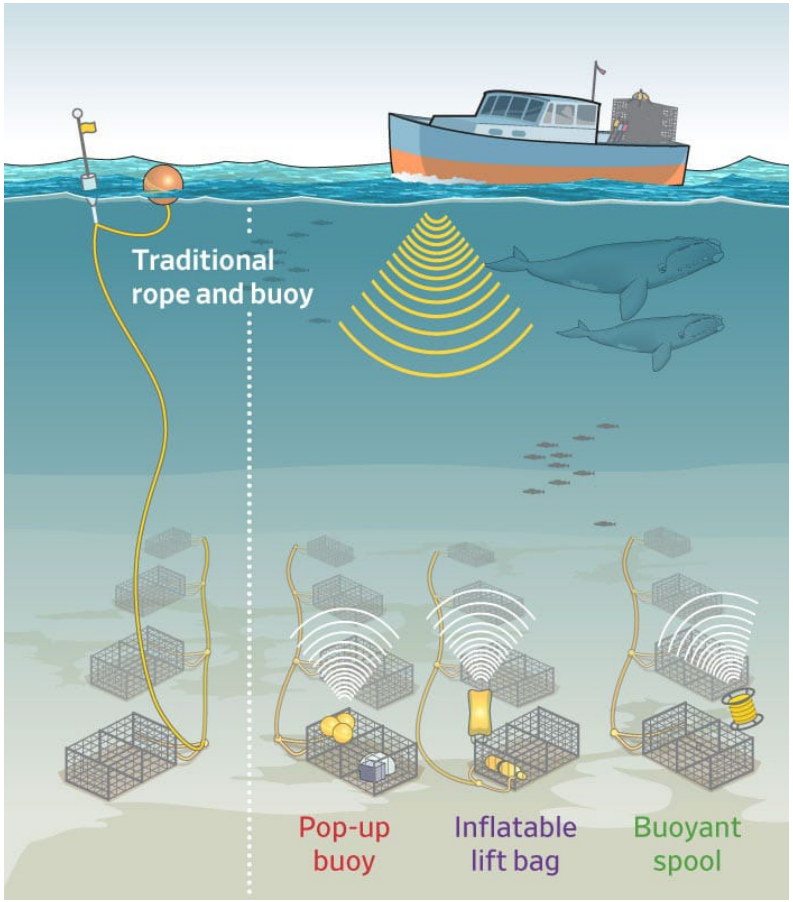
- Whale species distribution of the WA coast

On demand gear overview

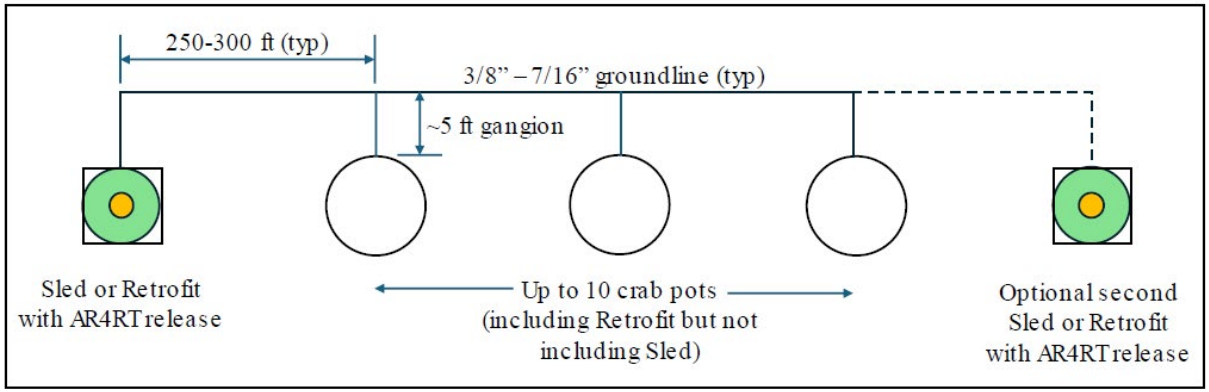
Release types:
- Timed
- Acoustic

Float mechanism:
- Pop-up buoy
- Inflatable lift bag
- Buoyant spool

Gear configuration:
- Single pot
- Longline of pots



Testing in the CA D-crab fishery



General layout of the trap strings used during the CA EFP testing program in 2024 (Testing summary report)

Cascadia Research Collective

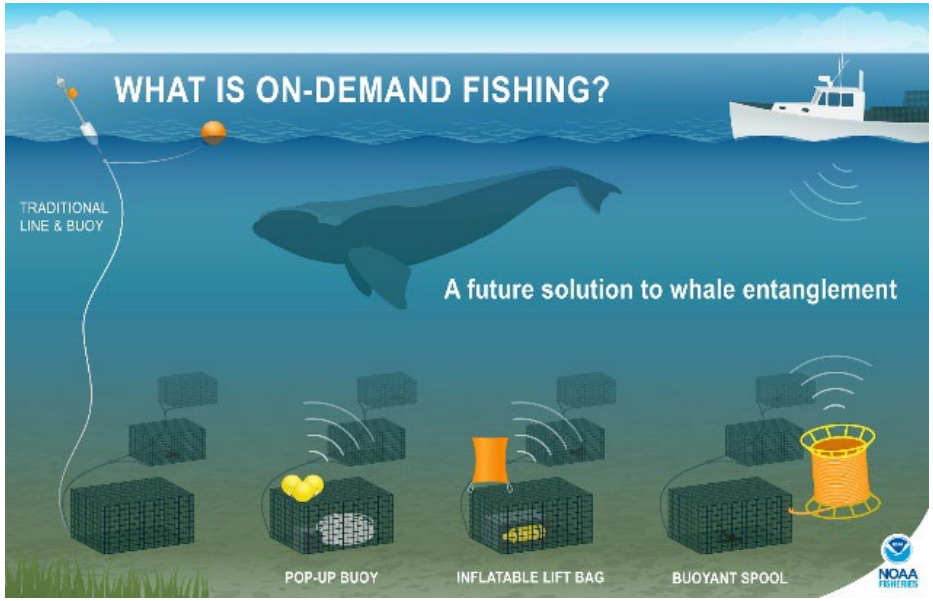
Cascadia Research Collective

Examining the practicality and utility of implementing On-Demand gear for the Pacific Northwest Dungeness Crab fishery to reduce entanglement risk

A proposal to the

Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program Grant

Proposed partners: Cascadia Research, WDFW, Quinault, and SMELTS



Cascadia Research Collective

Cascadia Research Collective

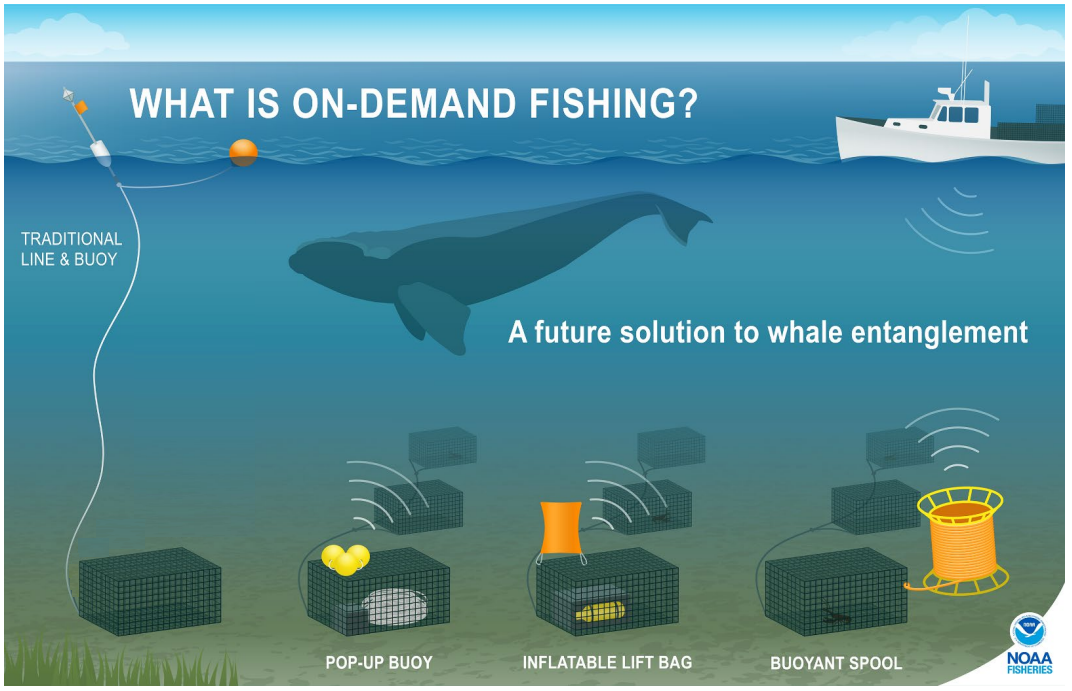
- Non-profit located in Olympia, WA
- Studying large whale populations along the US West coast since 1979
- Responding to large whale entanglements in WA, OR, and CA since 1999.
- Training responders in WA, OR and CA
- Collecting data from entangled whales to better understand how entanglements happen, which populations are affected and support mitigation efforts

Ropeless / On-Demand Fishing Gear

Cascadia Research Collective

One proposed solution under discussion to mitigating large whale entanglements is '**ropeless**' or '**on-demand**' gear.

While '**on-demand**' gear has had success in some fisheries, implementing this gear in the **Pacific Northwest outer coast Dungeness crab fishery** requires careful consideration of the characteristics of the fishery and the whales the gear is meant to mitigate.



On-Demand Considerations in the PNW Dungeness Crab Fishery

- Managing the gear on deck
- Single traps vs long-lining
- Speed of deployment and retrieval
- How the gear performs in PNW weather / depths fished
- Retrieving buried gear sets
- Managing gear in areas with multiple fishermen and multiple fisheries

Other considerations?

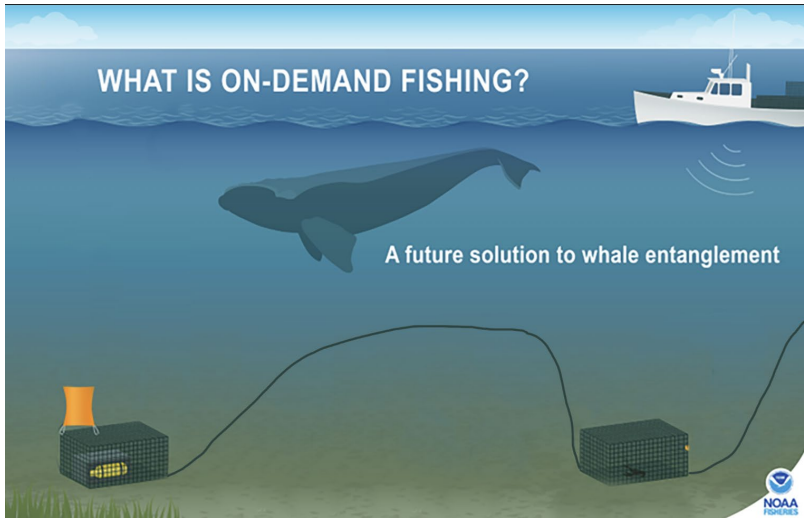
How Does On-Demand Gear Change the Entanglement Risk for Whales

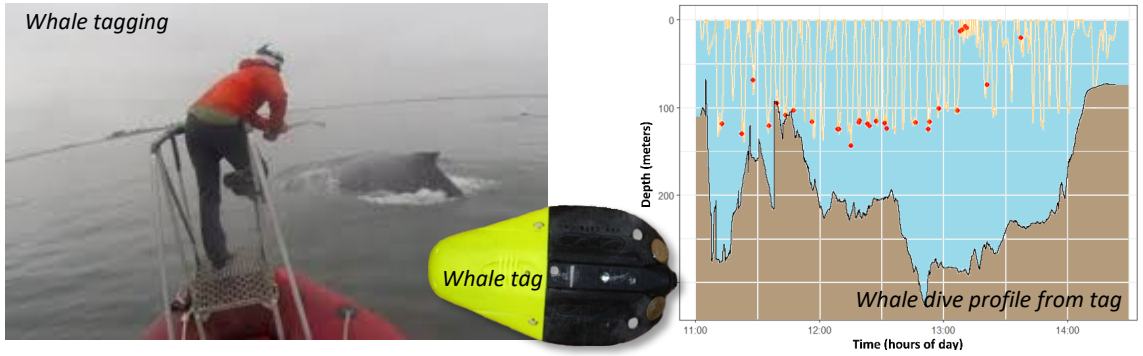
While single pots could truly be ropeless, the cost per on-demand unit will be prohibitive for a fisherman to change all pots to
on-demand.

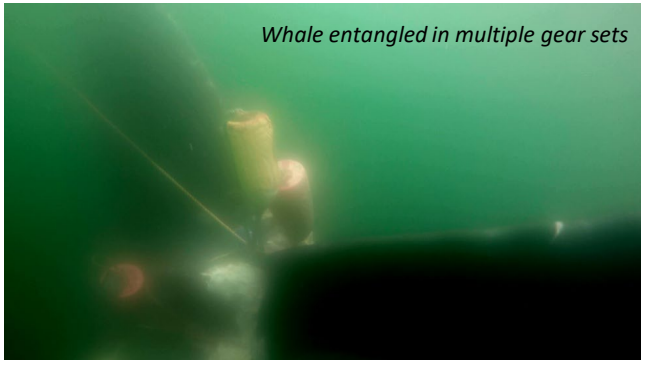
Long-lining (3 to 10 pots together) has been proposed as a solution to reduce the cost

The choice of line between pots will be a consideration for how whales may interact with the line:

- feeding on the bottom
- feeding above the bottom







Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program Grant

Cascadia is proposing a collaboration to:

1. Determine the viability of implementing on-demand fishing gear in the PNW Dungeness crab fishery
   - paying Tribal fishermen and WA commercial fishermen to test gear

2. Better understand how humpback and gray whales use the water column in PNW waters
   - Attaching tags to whales that measure depth, speed, acceleration

3. Bring together whale researchers, entanglement responsders and fishermen to examine gear recovered during entanglement responses to better understand how whales become entangled and propose methods to reduce entanglement risk through modification of existing fishing gear

Evaluating On-Demand Gear

Have a small number of (~3) of tribal and non-tribal fishermen test deployments:

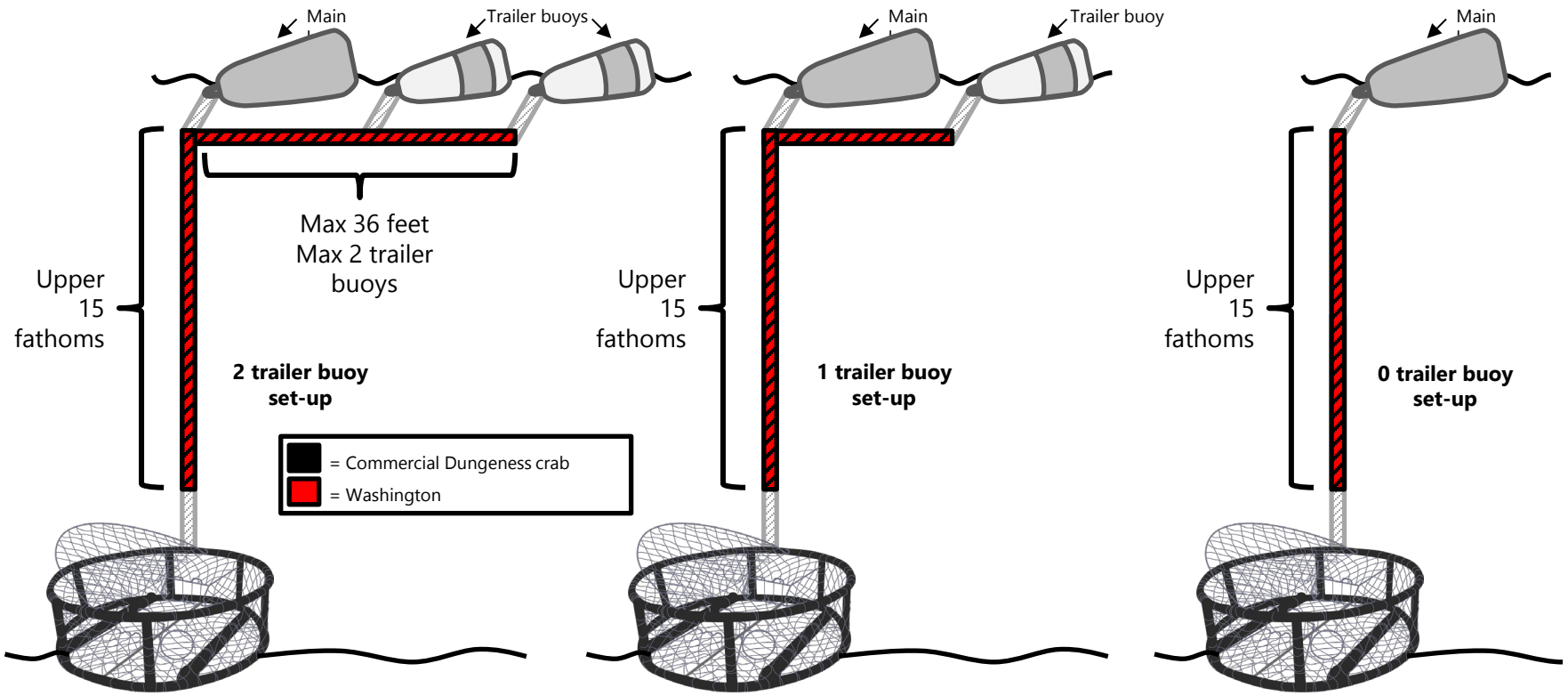
- Single On-Demand pots in Grays Harbor (during times of gray whale presence (April 2026)
- Longline On-Demand pots in the outer coast (May-June 2026)

  - Includes paid training and equipment to deploy and recover SMELTS and EdgeTech on-demand gear systems
  - Compensation for fishermen and vessels costs to deploy and retrieve gear
  - Workshop/debrief on the success and failures of the gear testing at end of project

Proposed line marking rule

Fully implemented comprehensive line marking proposal
December 1, 2028

Washington costal commercial Dungeness crab fishery with red and black marked line used for any **surface line *and*** the **upper 15 fathoms of the main line**



Next Steps

F&W Commission Meeting
Public Hearing

- March 20-22, 2025

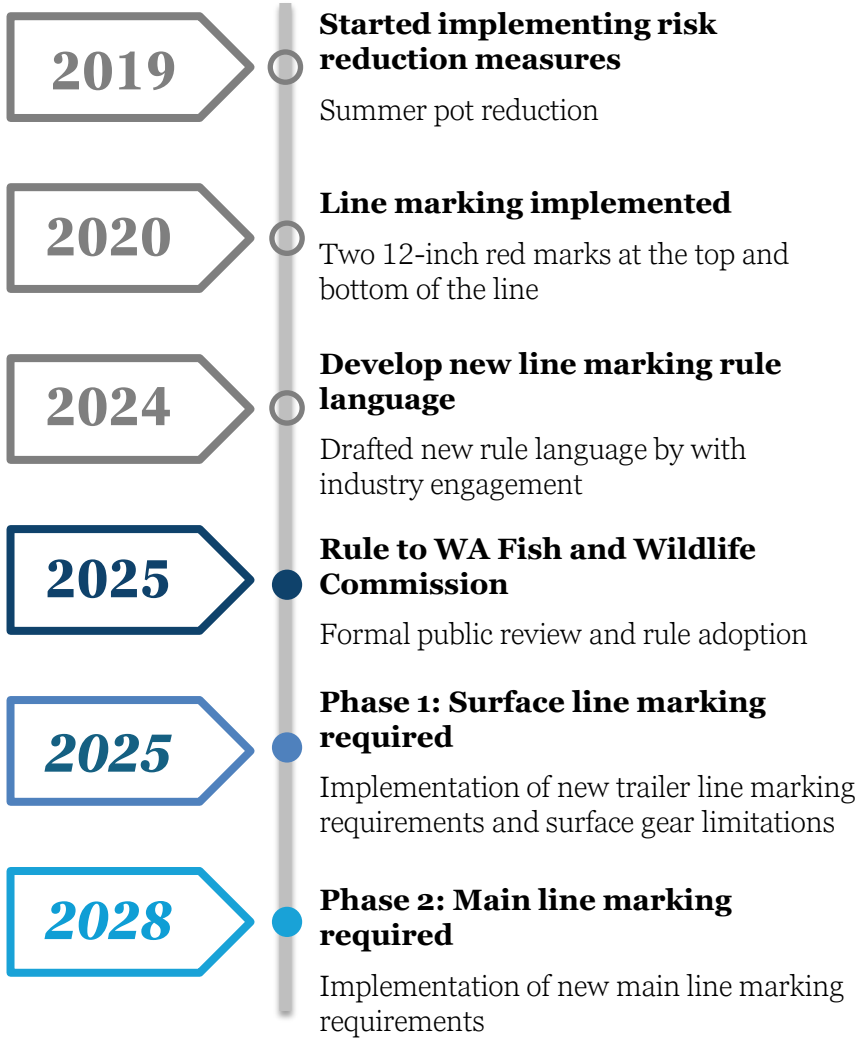
Public Comment
open until March 24th at noon

- ❑ Public engagement webpage
- ❑ Email: commercialcrabrules@publicinput.com
- ❑ Voicemail to 855-925-2801 project code 11027

F&W Commission Meeting *Decision*

- April 3-5, 2025
- Olympia, WA

Review the compliance guide



Catch update

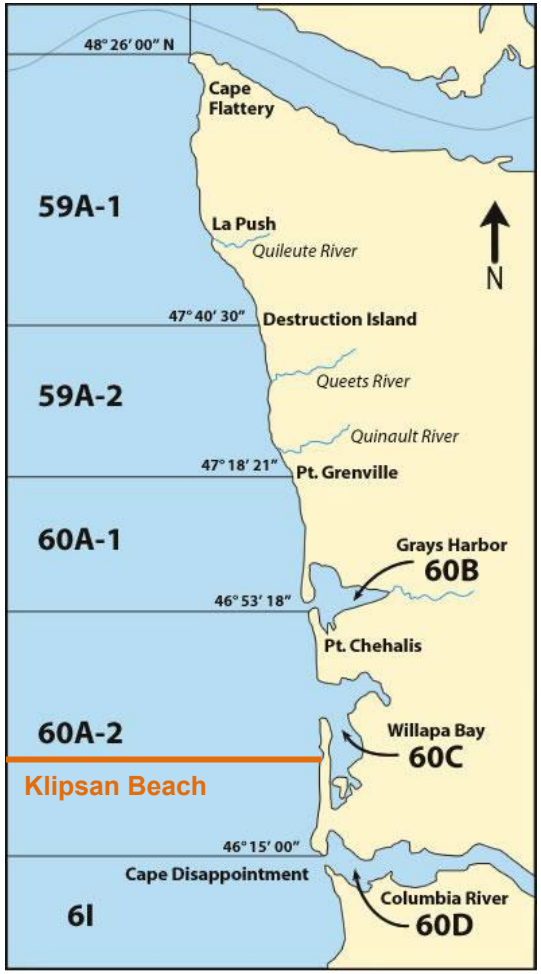
24-25 State Catch Update

Catch (lbs) by state fleet within first 55 days of season
(S of Klipsan Beach: 1/15/25 – 3/10/25; N of Klipsan Beach: 2/11/25 – 3/10/25)

Area	Catch (pounds)
59A1	67,087
59A2	181,972
60A1	1,462,367
60A2*	5,566,760
60B	69,900
60C	960,861
61	1,139,360
Total	**9,448,307**

*Includes catch from area 60D

Commercial Crab Fishing
WDFW Catch Reporting Areas



24-25 State Catch Update

Landings as of 3/10/2025 in tribal sharing areas

Season	Time Period	Area	Catch (pounds)	Landings	Total Pounds	Total Landings	Days with Landings
2023-24 (02/01/24 – 02/28/24)	First 28 days	59A2	248,343	45	1,833,504	528	26
		60A1	1,498,000	392			
		60B	87,161	91			
2024-25 (02/11/25 – 03/10/25)		59A2	181,972	42	1,714,239	488	27
		60A1	1,462,367	355			
		60B	69,900	91			

6.5% less poundage landed than at this point last season

7.6% fewer landings than at this point last season

24-25 Quinault Catch Update

Landings as of 3/11/2025 in tribal sharing areas

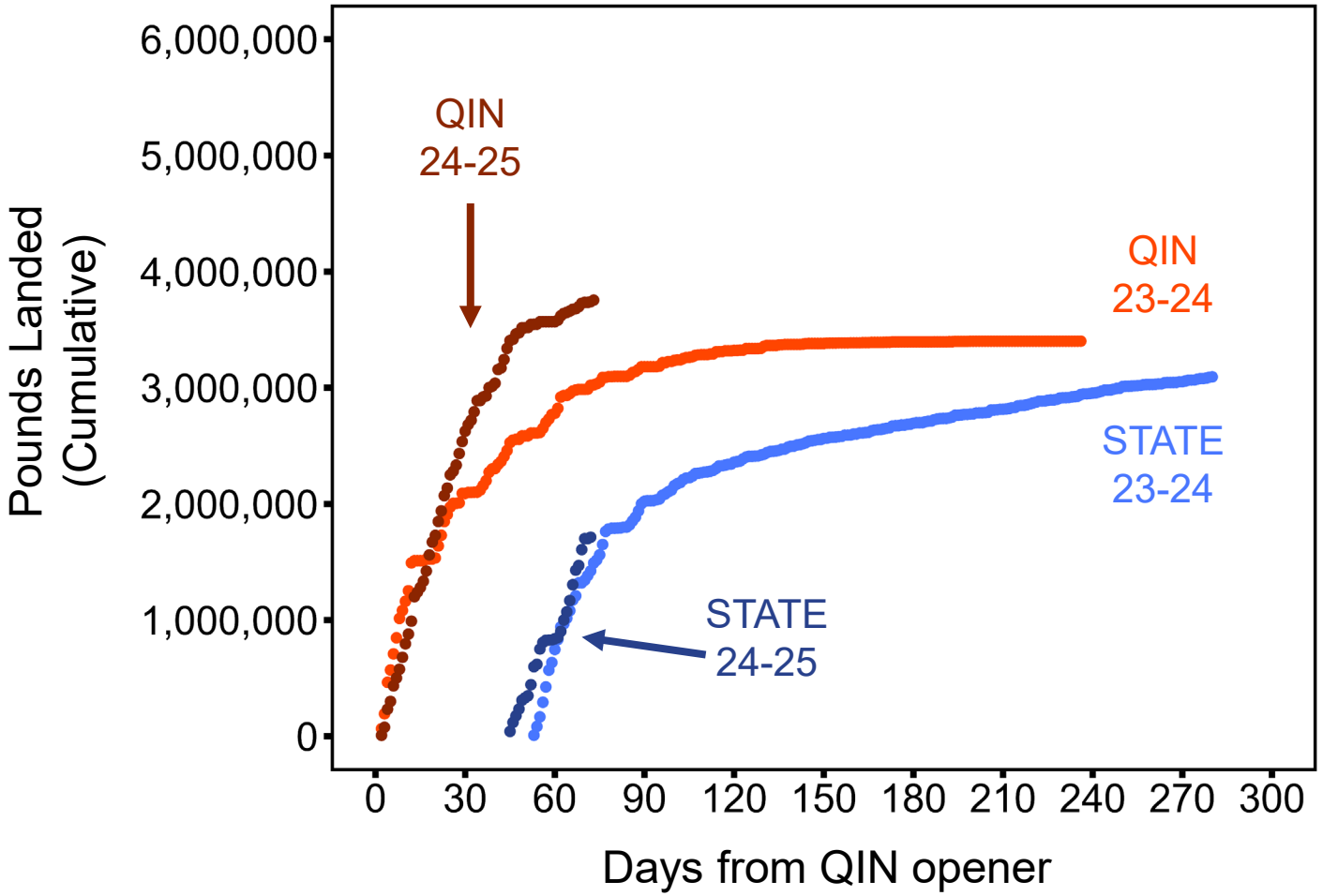
Season	Time Period	Area	Catch (pounds)	Landings	Total Pounds	Total Landings	Days with Landings
2023-24 (12/11/23 – 02/21/24)	First 73 days	59A2	164,776	16	3,025,472	403	55
		60A1	2,835,559	364			
		60B	25,137	23			
2024-25 (12/29/24 – 03/11/25)		59A2	438,043	28	3,754,959	583	67
		60A1	3,215,199	446			
		60B	101,716	109			

24.1% more poundage landed than at this point last season

44.7% more landings than at this point last season

Cumulative Catch by Year

State landings through 3/10/2025 and QIN landings through 3/11/2025 in tribal sharing areas



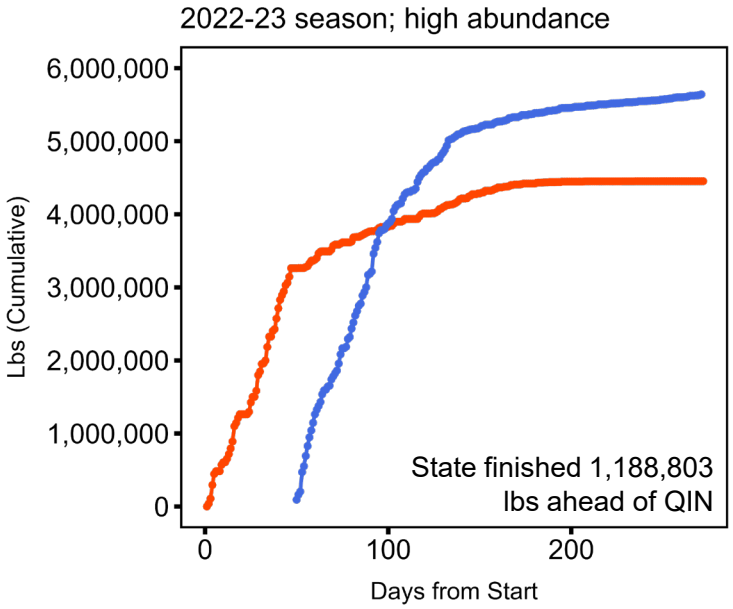
QIN landings through 3/02/25 and STATE landings through 3/10/25 within 59A2, 60A1, and 60B.

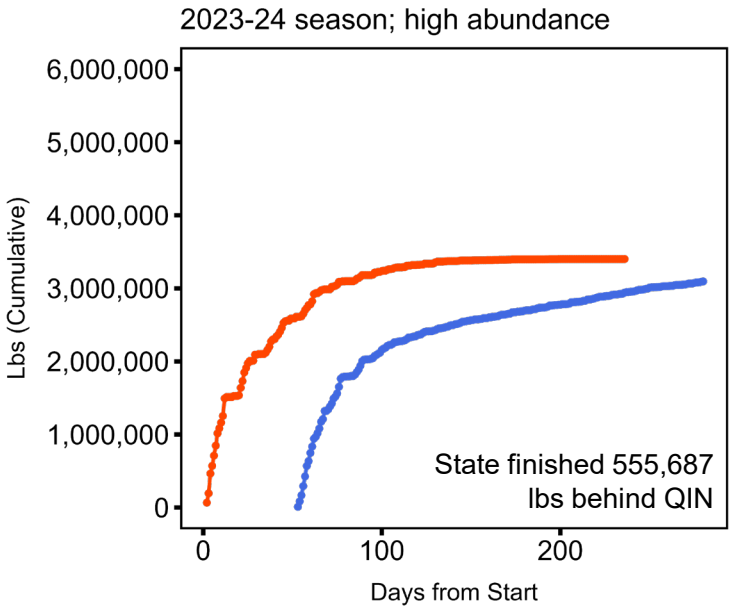
The state is currently **1,935,744** pounds behind QIN

Historical catch

Historical catch within the first 28 days of the State fishery

Season	Scale	State catch	QIN catch	Catch Difference
2009-10	med	1,797,611	2,593,067	795,456
2010-11	med-high	2,769,519	3,405,234	635,715
2011-12	low	1,170,768	1,677,666	506,898
2012-13	med-high	2,662,969	2,985,841	322,872
2013-14	low-med	702,833	1,756,167	1,053,334
2014-15	low	532,068	1,424,792	892,724
2015-16	low	897,806	1,382,125	484,319
2016-17	med	2,000,445	2,326,239	325,794
2017-18	med-high	1,330,781	2,303,460	972,679
2018-19	high	1,635,970	2,634,688	998,718
2019-20	low	962,615	1,451,029	488,414
2020-21	low	1,138,273	2,073,441	935,168
2021-22	high	2,191,488	3,003,114	811,626
2022-23	high	2,185,184	3,614,933	1,429,749
2023-24	high	1,840,613	3,097,742	1,257,129
2024-25	**high**	**1,714,239**	**3,754,959**	**2,040,720**
	Average	1,595,824	2,461,220	871,957
	95% CI	±329,334	±384,175	±209,794





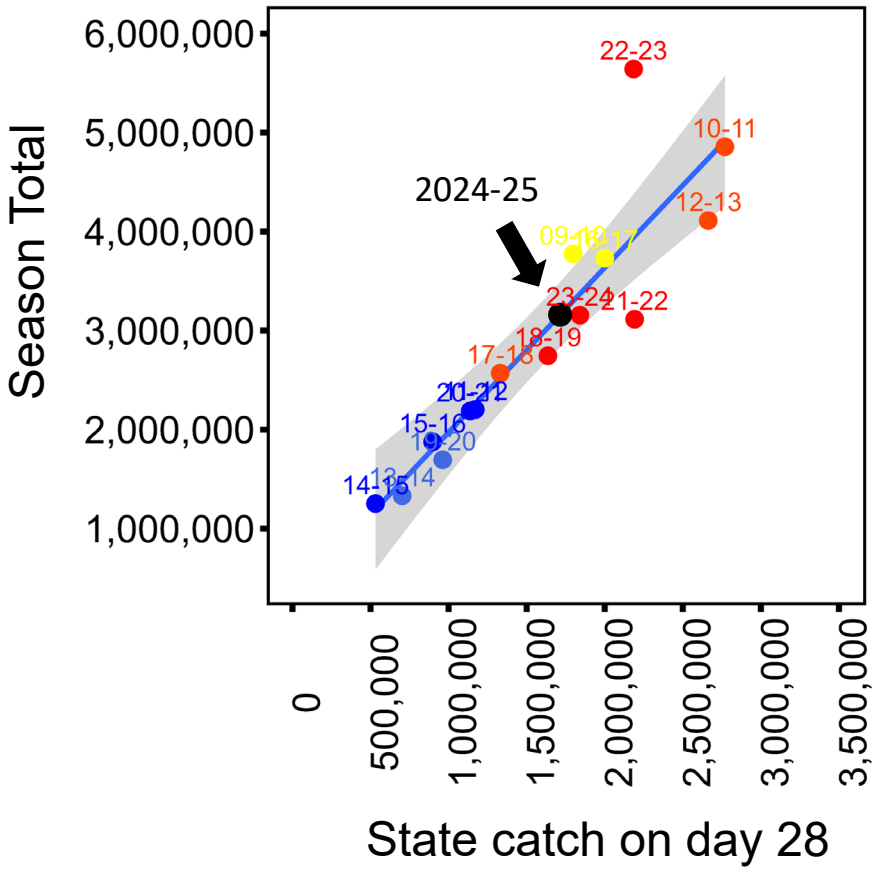
Historical Catch Remaining

Historical State catch within tribal sharing areas

Season	Scale	State catch (d28)	Season total	Catch remaining	Percent of season total caught (d28)
2009-10	med	1,797,611	3,774,221	1,976,610	47.6%
2010-11	med-high	2,769,519	4,856,376	2,086,857	57.0%
2011-12	low	1,170,768	2,202,589	1,031,821	53.2%
2012-13	med-high	2,662,969	4,111,312	1,448,343	64.8%
2013-14	low-med	702,833	1,331,470	628,637	52.8%
2014-15	low	532,068	1,077,833	545,765	49.4%
2015-16	low	897,806	1,876,290	978,484	47.9%
2016-17	med	2,000,445	3,731,412	1,730,967	53.6%
2017-18	med-high	1,330,781	2,570,148	1,239,367	51.8%
2018-19	high	1,635,970	2,745,869	1,109,899	59.6%
2019-20	low	962,615	1,695,153	732,538	56.8%
2020-21	low	1,138,273	2,188,156	1,049,883	52.0%
2021-22	high	2,191,488	3,114,530	923,042	70.4%
2022-23	high	2,185,184	5,641,387	3,456,203	38.7%
2023-24	high	1,840,613	3,094,296	1,253,683	59.5%
2024-25	**high**	**1,714,239**			
			Average	1,346,140	54.3%
			CI	374,469	3.8%

The State is currently 2,040,720 pounds behind QIN. After this point, the State has caught or exceeded this amount in 2 of the last 15 seasons.

Projected Season Totals



2024-25 projected remaining catch:

- State: 1.06 – 1.68 million
- QIN: 423,659 – 889,797

2024-25 projected season totals:

- State: 2.78 – 3.39 million
- QIN: 4.07 – 4.53 million
- Difference: 679,109 – 1.75 million
- State share: 40.0 – 45.4%

Discussion

Questions & Discussion