



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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

December 14, 2018

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab Fisher:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that we have at this time regarding the opening of the 2018-19 coastal Dungeness crab fishery. There is still outstanding information to inform the season opening north of the Queets River and south of Klipsan Beach, which we will provide as soon as it becomes available.

Klipsan Beach to Queets River

Beginning last year, the State-Quinault Harvest Management Plan included an approach that uses preliminary catch information from the Quinault fishery to provide insight on crab abundance and inform the number of head-start days. In the past, the number of head start days were negotiated based on historical catch and the results of harvest sharing, recognizing that decisions on the appropriate number of head start days were made with little to no information on the current seasons crab abundance or other variables that are unknown prior to the season opening.

Using an approach that evaluates catch by the Quinault fleet during the first 31-days of their fishery and estimates whether abundance is expected to be in the low, medium, or high range, allows state and Quinault managers to implement a more informed head start period based on preliminary information on crab abundance. The application of this approach relies on the general trend we have seen that shows that if crab abundance is low, the state fleet may not have the opportunity to catch their share of the crab in the Quinault U&A and a shorter head start is necessary. Alternatively, if crab abundance is high, the state fleet can catch their share much quicker and can exceed their harvest share suggesting the need for a longer Quinault head-start period.

The most recent catch update from Quinault shows their catch at 1,625,614 pounds through December 9, 2018. Even if Quinault does not make another landing during the 31-day period that ends next Wednesday, December 19, 2018, their average daily catch indicates that crab abundance is in the high range and triggers a 49-day head start. Based on the Quinault opening date of November 19, 2018, the state fishery can set gear on January 7, 2019 and open north of Klipsan Beach on January 10 (details below). State and Quinault managers have agreed to implement this approach in combination with inseason data sharing to track catch early in the state fishery to identify whether changes to management measures are necessary to maintain our harvest sharing goals.

The Quinault SMA will not change from what was in place at the start of the 2017-2018 season and is scheduled to be closed through March 3, 2019. However, WDFW and Quinault managers will track inseason catch and consider changes as necessary.

State Season Opening from Klipsan Beach to the Queets River:

- The state coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery between Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) and the Queets River (47°31.70) will **open at 9:00 am, January 10, 2019.**
- A 73-hour **gear pre-set** period will begin at **8:00 am January 7, 2019.**
- **Hold inspections** will begin at **noon on January 9, 2019.**

Quinault Special Management Area:

The Quinault primary SMA will be closed to state fishers beginning at 8:00 AM January 7, 2019. The primary SMA is scheduled to remain closed to state fishers through March 3, 2019.

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: 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: 47°08.00' N. Lat. – 124°11.20' W. Lon.

Queets River to the US Canada Border

WDFW has also finalized Harvest Management Plans with the Makah and Quileute Tribes for the 2018-2019 season. These Plans remain the same as what was in place for the 2017-2018 season. The State-Quileute agreement again includes a provision that guides when the area between the Queets River and Destruction Island is open based on Quileute catch in the entire Quileute U&A. Note, per the agreement, the area between the Queets River and Destruction Island will not open before January 1, 2019. We will provide more details on the opening in this specific area as it becomes available.

As in the past, the season opening for the area north of Destruction Island will not open before January 15, 2019 and could be further delayed if needed to provide the Quileute Tribe with 20 fishable days after December 1, 2018. WDFW will provide an update to confirm the season opening date north of Destruction Island as soon as the fishable day criteria is finalized.

Klipsan Beach to Point Arena, California

Tri-State Dungeness crab policy representatives from Washington, Oregon and California met last week and agreed to continue extend the delayed opening of the 2018-19 Coastal Dungeness crab fishery from Point Area, California north to the US/Canada border through at least December 30, 2018. This decision was based on crab condition tests conducted by WDFW, ODFW and CDFW, which shows that some test areas in each state still do not currently meet the minimum meat recovery criteria. In addition, areas in southern Oregon and northern California continue to show levels of domoic acid above the action level.

A second round of meat recovery and domoic acid testing is being coordinated to provide updated results by December 22. WDFW will share additional information regarding the season opening as soon as possible following the completion of these tests.

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This information and future updates will also be available on WDFW web page:
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/>

Please stay tuned for more information on the state coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery 2018-2019 season opening. If you have questions regarding the information contained in this letter or other regulations pertaining to the coastal Dungeness crab fishery, please contact Dan Ayres at (360) 249-4628 ext. 209.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Hall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'H'.

Heather Hall
Intergovernmental Ocean Policy

cc: Michele Culver
Annette Hoffmann
Dan Ayres

