



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200 • (360) 902-2200 • TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

July 5, 2017

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab License Owner:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information regarding proposed changes to regulations affecting Washington's coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) developed proposed revisions to coastal commercial Dungeness crab regulations to improve the intent and enforceability of existing rules and include; streamlining the replacement buoy tag program and allowing transport of out-of-state gear through Washington waters. The proposed changes are summarized below. A copy of the CR-102 and the proposed regulatory language is available on the WDFW webpage under the Rules Information Center at:
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regulations/development.html#17-10-071> .

Allow transport of out of state gear through Washington waters. At industry meetings held this spring, we discussed the practice of transiting crab gear used in Dungeness crab fisheries in other areas such as Oregon or Alaska through Washington waters. Many industry members were unaware that transiting gear through Washington waters with gear that does not have buoy tags issued by WDFW is prohibited under current state regulations. WDFW managers and enforcement staff understand that under certain situations it may be prohibitive to transport and find sufficient dockside storage, particularly in years when the season has been delayed in both Washington and Oregon for a significant period of time. WDFW understands this dilemma and in response, through these rule changes, the transport of out-of-state gear will be allowed as needed when fishermen receive a permit issued by WDFW. The permit will allow WDFW enforcement to effectively track out-of-state gear as it is transported through Washington waters and will require permit holders to record the location of the gear that is set.

Modify replacement buoy tag periods and limits. This proposed rule change would reduce the overall number of replacement tags issued to each license owner from 10 to 5 percent of the total number of buoy tags issued according to each license owner's pot limit (300 or 500) and would make replacement tags available only from March 1 through June 30. The reduced number of replacement tags would bring the amount of tags available each season in line with historical replacement tag use while still allowing fishermen to address gear loss on an as needed basis. While the Washington coastal crab industry has been very proactive in regard to reducing and removing lost and abandoned crab gear, there are increasing interactions with Dungeness crab gear and whales and other marine mammals along the west coast. Similar to changes to the replacement buoy tag program that were implemented in 2015, these changes would delay the time period when replacement buoy tags are available providing time for fishermen to locate and recover crab gear that has been displaced prior to receiving replacement buoy tags.

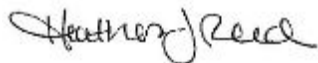
The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission will be briefed on the proposed rule changes at the Commission meeting August 4-5, 2017 at the Natural Resources Building in Olympia. Public comment will be taken as part of the August Commission meeting. Interested parties can also provide public comment through August 3, 2017 by e-mail to Rules.Coordinator@dfw.wa.gov or by mail to Scott Bird, Rules Coordinator, Post Office Box 43200 Olympia, WA 98504-3200.

Keep in mind that scheduled times and the agenda are subject to change. Revisions, updates, and additional information are posted on the Commission web page:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/meetings.html>. Contact the Commission office with questions and to identify special accommodation needs at (360) 902-226, TDD (360) 902-2207.

If you have any questions about this notice please contact me at 360-902-2487 or Heather.Reed@dfw.wa.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Reed". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Heather Reed
Intergovernmental Ocean Policy Coordinator

cc: Michele Culver
Mike Cenci
Dan Chadwick
Dan Ayres