



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

48 Devonshire Road, Montesano, Washington 98563-9618 (360) 249-4628 FAX (360) 249-1229

November 6, 2014

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 in order to; improve the intent and enforceability of existing rules; minimize lost or derelict crab gear; improve safety for the coastal Dungeness crab fishery; and to allow for a consistent season opening with Oregon. 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 <http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regulations/development.html#14-16-121>

Streamline the season opening date. The proposed rule change revises the way the season opening is specified in regulation so that instead of describing a specific date (e.g., December 1) that the fishery will open, the season will be closed until opened by emergency regulation. In practice, this is how the season is opened each year, through emergency regulation to reflect season opening delays necessary to meet state-tribal harvest management agreements or if pre-season testing indicates that crab have not fully recovered from the molt period, the change simply streamlines the process.

Modify replacement buoy tag periods and limits. Similar to the change above, proposed changes to this rule would remove the link to replacement tag issuance to the "December 1" season opening and instead will allow fishermen to obtain replacement tags 15 days after the season is opened, no matter the specific date of the opening. The proposed rule change would also reduce the overall number of replacement tags issued to each license owner from 15 percent to 10 percent of the total amount of buoy tags issued according to each license owner's pot limit (300 or 500).

Modify logbook requirements. As currently written, this rule omits the requirement for crab caught off Oregon from being recorded in a logbook when those crab are landed in Washington, which can be as much as 1 million pounds per season. A revision to the current rules is needed to eliminate the omission and ensure a complete record of catch for both WDFW and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). In addition to providing important spatial data for Dungeness crab management, logbook data can be a useful tool for enforcement officers and by changing this rule, we could improve the enforceability of other crab regulations that are tied to area fished (e.g., pot limits).

Establish a gear tending requirement. Currently, throughout the coastal commercial Dungeness crab season, fishers can leave their gear in the ocean without any restrictions as to how often the gear needs to be fished. New regulations are needed to require that crab gear is tended periodically during the summer (May 1 through September 15). The proposed regulation will provide a mechanism for WDFW enforcement officers to cite the operator when crab gear is left in the ocean unattended for more than 21

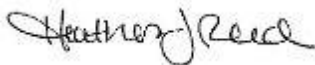
days without making a landing. The change will minimize the opportunity for unattended gear to be unlawfully fished by fishermen other than the legal owner or operator and minimize the potential for unattended gear to become lost or abandoned, often termed derelict gear.

Extend pre-season gear set period. The Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee (Tri-State Committee) met this spring and agreed to revise the pre-season gear set period in Washington and Oregon. This change will extend the pre-season gear set period from 64 hours to 73 hours prior to the season opening so that commercial fishermen will be retrieving their gear in daylight hours rather than in the dark. ODFW is also in the process of revising their regulations to reflect the Tri-State Committee decision. This change will improve safety, enhance enforceability and provide for a coordinated season opening for the Washington and Oregon commercial Dungeness crab fisheries.

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission will be briefed on the proposed rule changes at the Commission meeting on November 7, 2014 at 1:00 pm. 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. Public comment will not be taken as part of the November Commission meeting but interested parties can provide public comment on November 25th at 9:00 am at the Region Six Headquarters in Montesano or by submitting written comments no later than November 25th by e-mail to Heather.Reed@dfw.wa.gov or by U.S. mail to Heather Reed, 48 Devonshire Road, Montesano, WA 98563.

If you have any questions about this notice please contact me at 360-249-1202 or Heather.Reed@dfw.wa.gov

Sincerely,



Heather Reed
Coastal Marine Resources Policy Coordinator

cc: Phil Anderson
Mike Cenci
Michele Culver