

## **Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture November 28, 2018 Hearing Background**

[Senator Mike McGuire](#), Chairman of the [Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture \(JCFA\)](#), and [Assemblymember Mark Stone](#), Vice Chairman, are hosting a hearing: Protecting California's Whales from Entanglement and Maintaining the Sustainability of the Dungeness Crab Fishery. The hearing will be held Wednesday November 28, 2018 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the [Aquarium of the Bay](#) – Farallon Room, PIER 39, The Embarcadero & Beach Street San Francisco, California.

Presentations and discussion will focus on [California's Dungeness crab fishery](#) and efforts to [reduce whale entanglements in fishing gear](#). The agenda features presentations by agency leaders, scientists, commercial fishing representatives, non-governmental organizations, and environmental advocates.

[Deborah Halberstadt](#), California Natural Resources Agency Deputy Secretary for Oceans and Coastal Policy, and [Charlton Bonham](#), Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, headline this year's list of speakers and presenters.

The hearing will include testimony by representatives of [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), [California Department of Public Health](#) and [Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations](#) covering topics such as the current [crab season](#) and [crab quality](#), [domoic acid testing](#), [2015-16 crab season disaster relief](#), the [Dungeness Crab Task Force](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions about the 2018-19 season](#).

The committee will also hear testimony about efforts to reduce whale entanglement in crab fishing gear from members of the [California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group](#) and others with a focus on [preventing whale entanglements](#), [entanglement forensics reports](#), [Dungeness crab fishing best practices](#), and [pending litigation over entanglements](#).

Additional information including links to: the agenda, press releases, articles about the hearing, live stream links, and presenter biographies can be viewed at the [committee web site](#) under the "[2018 hearings](#)" heading.

The Dungeness crab fishery is one of the oldest commercial fisheries in California dating back to the time of the Gold Rush. Dungeness crab are taken in waters of the state from Crescent City to the Morro Bay-Avila area with [seasonal landings of up to \\$95 million](#). The fishery has been regulated by the California State Legislature since 1895. Dungeness crab fisheries are managed on the 3-S principle, which refers to sex, size, and season limits. Only male crabs greater than 6.25 inches across the widest part of their carapace can be landed and the fishery is closed during the time of year when legal-sized crabs are molting and mating.

[National Marine Fisheries Service \(NMFS\) reports document a recent increase in the number of whales entangled in fixed-gear fisheries along the West Coast](#). In 2017 there were 31 confirmed entanglements, lower than the historic highs of 2015 (50) and 2016 (48), but a significant increase compared to pre-2014 levels when the average was less than 10 confirmed entanglements per year. The largest portion of identifiable gear involved in these entanglements was from the Dungeness crab fishery. In 2105, a [California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group](#) was established to develop [short-term strategies and explore long-term solutions to reduce the risk of entanglements](#) with Dungeness crab fishing gear.

Please contact [Tom Weseloh](#), Chief Consultant, Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture for more information.