

California Department of Fish and Wildlife News Release

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Dungeness Crab Commercial Season Update

Based on updated information and in response to concerns from the commercial Dungeness crab fleet, including written requests from Port Associations to further delay, CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham intends to further delay the start date for the California Dungeness crab fishery south of the Mendocino/Sonoma county line.

Today, Director Bonham issued a [preliminary determination](#) that the Nov. 22, 2019 start date poses a significant risk of marine life entanglement. The anticipated management response is a further delay of the opening of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in that area until Dec. 15, 2019.

An aerial survey conducted by CDFW within Greater Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries on Monday, Nov. 18 showed whales throughout the survey area with concentrations foraging in depths between 30 and 50 fathoms off Point Reyes and Half Moon Bay. CDFW is working to schedule a follow up aerial reconnaissance flight to further evaluate whale presence in advance of Dec. 15 and will convene the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group the first week of December to conduct a risk evaluation.

Under the authority of section 8276.1(c)(1) of the Fish and Game Code, the Director may restrict take of commercial Dungeness crab if there is a significant risk of marine life entanglement due to fishing gear. As required in Fish and Game Code, section 8276.1(c)(4), the Director is providing 48 hours' notice to the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group and other stakeholders.

Director Bonham will consider any recommendations or new information provided by 4:45 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 22, 2019. Anyone with recommendations and information related to this preliminary determination should submit it to whalesafefisheries@wildlife.ca.gov by that deadline.

No vessel may take, possess or land crab in an area closed for a significant entanglement risk. Fishing gear may not be deployed in any area closed to fishing.

CDFW, the fleet and the interested stakeholders are still at the start of an emerging effort to implement real-time decision-making processes. For the last 24 hours, CDFW

has been engaged in real-time discussion and decision making, responding to industry requests for further delay.

Everyone recognizes the risks and all are committed to addressing that risk and developing the tools to assess and manage risk with more refinement. CDFW is committed to continuing to evaluate information as it is available in real-time to ensure that restrictions on the fishery are lifted as expeditiously as possible. CDFW appreciates the challenges and difficulties that come with the beginning of a new approach, and we appreciate the understanding of the public, the fleet, the Working Group and Californians hungry for crabs.

In related news, test results received today from the California Department of Public Health show there is no longer a public health concern regarding the safety of crab from the Mendocino/Sonoma county line to the California/Mexico border.

For the latest information on the Dungeness crab season, please visit www.wildlife.ca.gov/crab and [2019-2020 Dungeness Crab Fishery Best Practices Guide](#).

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