



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
DECLARATION OF SEASON DELAY DUE TO SIGNIFICANT MARINE LIFE
ENTANGLEMENT RISK IN THE DUNGENESS CRAB COMMERCIAL FISHERY

Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(c), I find and declare that

I.

The California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) met on October 15 and 31, 2019 to review available data and evaluate entanglement risk factors based on the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP).

II.

The four RAMP factors evaluated by the Working Group led to a majority recommendation to open the Central and Northern Management Areas as scheduled on November 15 and December 1, 2019 respectively. In consideration of the number of whales still present, a minority of Working Group members recommended a delay in the season opener for the Central Management Area from November 15 to December 1.

III.

Department staff conducted an independent assessment of available data related to the RAMP factors and the factors outlined in Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(c)(3). Marine life concentrations for Humpback and Blue whales remain high and as a result, the commercial fishery poses a significant risk of marine life entanglement. Based on this independent analysis, Department staff recommended an eight-day season delay in the Central Management Area.

IV.

On November 1, 2019, I made a preliminary determination of significant risk of marine life entanglement. Notice of the preliminary determination and anticipated management action was provided to the Working Group and other stakeholders with opportunity to provide recommendations and new information through 5pm on November 4, 2019.

V.

Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(c), after consultation with the Working Group and consideration of recommendations and new information provided in response to the November 1, 2019, notice of preliminary determination of significant entanglement risk, I have determined that conducting the California Dungeness Crab fishery this year with a start date of November 15 for the Central Management Area poses a significant risk of marine life entanglement, and that the appropriate

management response is a seven-day delay of the opening of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the Central Management Area.

VI.

THEREFORE, under the authority granted by Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1(c)(3), I am delaying the opening of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the Central Management Area (south of the Mendocino/Sonoma County line). The season will open on November 22, 2019 and traps can be set and baited 18 hours in advance, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 8283(b).

The next risk determination will be conducted on or prior to December 15, 2019 based on available data. That determination will utilize the RAMP and consultation with the Working Group. Updates and material regarding the entanglement risk evaluations in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery will be made available on the Department's web page: www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries



Charlton H. Bonham, Director

November 5, 2019 3:00 pm pacific

Date/Time