

November 24, 2004



## **ODFW INDUSTRY NOTICE TO: COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERS AND PROCESSORS**

### **Information on 2004-2005 Commercial Dungeness Crab Season Opener Regulations**

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has adopted a temporary rule to split the opening date for the Oregon 2004-05 ocean commercial Dungeness crab fishery. This is in response to low pick-out rates for crab in the Columbia River coastal area. The temporary rule, effective only for the 2004-05 season, will split Oregon's current single December 1 opening date into the following opening dates and locations:

- December 1: Cape Falcon (45°46'00" N. Lat.) south to the OR/CA border.
- December 15: OR/WA border south to Cape Falcon (45°46'00" N. Lat.)

The West Coast Dungeness crab fishery has traditionally had a single December 1 season opening from approximately Point Arena in California north to the Canadian border. Under the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission (PSMFC) Dungeness Crab Tri-state process, Oregon, Washington and California's Fish and Wildlife agencies consult on issues affecting the commercial Dungeness crab fishery. The Tri-state agreement includes procedures for pre-season meat pick-out testing of Dungeness crab. If crab meat fill out rates are not met (23% north and 25% south of Cascade Head in Oregon), a procedure is adopted to delay the season on all or part of the West Coast. The December 1 projected meat pick-out percentages from Point Arena in California to Garibaldi, OR were above the minimums set through the Tri-State process.

Crab quality testing has indicated that the area off of the mouth of the Columbia River has crab that is not projected to meet a 23% meat fill-out rate until December 15, 2004. The Tri-state agreement provides that an east-west ocean line be drawn at Cape Falcon in this situation. Below that line the season will open December 1 with the 64 hour gear pre-soak period in advance of that date. Above that line, the season will open December 15<sup>th</sup>. The split opening dates for Oregon allow much of the coast to open as scheduled while giving time for crab in the north to fill out to the required pick-out rate.

#### **Washington Tribal Area Closed until March 1, 2005**

Due to an extended closure by the State of Washington off of the North coast of Washington to accommodate the Tribal fisheries, Oregon fishers will be prohibited from fishing off those fishing grounds through March 1<sup>st</sup>. It is unlawful for any boat carrying an Oregon permit to take, land, or possess Dungeness crab taken north of a line at 46°53'18" N. Latitude (Point Chehalis) until

March 1, 2005. When that fishery re-opens on March 1, 2005, the state of Washington will impose a 100 pot limit in those waters.

### **Crab Pot Pre-Soak Requirements**

The ocean commercial Dungeness crab fishery pre-soak period of 64 hours remains the same, but is modified to reflect the two open dates. They are:

- South of Cape Falcon (45° 46' 00" N. Latitude) to the OR/CA border the pre-soak begins 8 a.m. November 28, 2004.
- OR/WA border south to Cape Falcon (45° 46' 00" N. Latitude) the pre-soak begins 8 a.m. December 12, 2004.

### **Vessel Hold Inspections:**

Vessel hold inspections will be on Tuesday, November 30 at the ports in areas south of Cape Falcon and on December 14 in ports north of Cape Falcon, including the Warrenton/Astoria area. If a vessel is located in a port north of Cape Falcon but the owner or operator plans to take part in the December 1 season opener south of Cape Falcon they may call their local Oregon State Police office to schedule a hold inspection. The vessel hold inspection has an added requirement for fishermen to specify the maximum number of pots they intend to fish. Also, the vessel operator or owner must declare their intention to fish north or south of Cape Falcon. Those vessels fishing south of Cape Falcon must wait 30 days following the December 15 opening to fish north of Cape Falcon. Each inspection certificate must be signed by the vessel operator or owner, not by a crewman.

Please contact ODFW Marine Resources Program or Oregon State Police if you have further questions.

For general questions call Keith Matteson or Cyreis Schmitt in the Newport MRP office at (541) 867-4741. The media contact is Brandon Ford at (541) 867-4741.

For questions specific to your area, contact your local MRP field office:

Astoria Marine Field Lab (503) 325-2462

Charleston Field Office (541) 888-5515

Brookings Field Office (541) 412-7364

For vessel hold inspections please call the Oregon State Police

Astoria: (503) 325-5515

Coos Bay: (541) 269-5999

Gold Beach: (541) 247-6641

Newport: (541) 265-5354

Tillamook: (503) 842-2899