

December 8, 2004



ODFW INDUSTRY NOTICE TO: COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERS AND PROCESSORS

Information on 2004-2005 Commercial Dungeness Crab Season Opener Regulations

REVISED

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is delaying the opening for the ocean commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the area north of Cape Falcon until further notice. In late November, ODFW adopted a temporary rule to split the opening date for the 2004-05 ocean commercial Dungeness crab fishery. This was 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, split Oregon's current single December 1 opening date into two opening dates and locations, divided at Cape Falcon. The area from Cape Falcon (45°46'00" N. Lat.) south to the OR/CA border opened on December 1, 2004. The area north of Cape Falcon to the OR/WA border was scheduled to open on December 15, 2004. However, recent crab quality (softshell) testing results indicate crab in the area north of Cape Falcon will not meet the minimum criteria to open the fishery on December 15, 2004. Consequently, the season opener for the north is delayed and the fishery south of Cape Falcon remains open:

- OR/WA border south to Cape Falcon (45°46'00" N. Lat.): Closed until further notice.
- Cape Falcon (45°46'00" N. Lat.) south to the OR/CA border: Opened December 1, 2004.

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. Under the agreement, the latest it may be delayed is January 15.

Washington plans to conduct additional crab quality testing during the week of December 19 to determine if they meet the minimum criteria (23% rate) to open the area north of Cape Falcon before January 15, 2005. It is anticipated that crab in this area will not meet minimum criteria before December 29, 2004. So, the earliest possible opening date for this area is December 29, 2004 and the latest possible date is January 15, 2005. The opening date will be announced as soon as possible after the quality test the week of December 19 to provide the industry with as much notice as possible.

Crab Pot Pre-Soak Requirements:

The ocean commercial Dungeness crab fishery pre-soak period is 64 hours prior to the opening of the fishery. Once the opening date is set for the area north of Cape Falcon, pots may be set 64 hours in advance of the opening date.

Vessel Hold Inspections:

The date for hold inspections for vessels planning to fish north of Cape Falcon has yet to be set, although it will be scheduled in ports north of Cape Falcon, including the Warrenton/Astoria area, for the day before the season opens. If a vessel plans to fish south of Cape Falcon before the end of December, 2004 and has not yet had a hold inspection, the owner or operator 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. Each vessel hold inspection certificate must be signed by the vessel operator or owner, not by a crewman.

Vessels That Declared to Fish South:

Those vessels fishing south of Cape Falcon must wait 30 days following the opening date north of Cape Falcon to fish in the northern area. Due to the delayed opener north of Cape Falcon until further notice, the date for vessels fishing south to begin fishing north of Cape Falcon is not yet known. Those vessels may not fish north of Cape Falcon on January 14, 2005 as originally announced.

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