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# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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**For immediate release**

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## **Ocean Dungeness crab season opener delayed**

NEWPORT – The opening of the ocean commercial Dungeness crab season from Point Arena, Calif., to the Canadian boarder will be delayed at least until Dec. 15. Sport harvest of crab in the ocean will also be delayed until Dec. 15.

Recreational harvest of Dungeness crab in Oregon’s bays and estuaries will remain open. Commercial harvest of crab in bays and estuaries will also remain open through Dec. 31.

The ocean commercial Dungeness crab season along the Oregon coast normally opens on Dec. 1, but can be delayed to ensure a high-quality product to consumers. Crab quality testing in November showed the Columbia River area and areas from Port Orford south to California experienced a late crab molt. Fishery managers in Oregon, Washington and California decided to delay the opening at least until Dec. 15 to allow crab quality to improve. Crab quality testing will continue into December.

“The results of the next tests will provide the three states’ managers with more information for setting an appropriate commercial crab season opening schedule,” said Patty Burke, manager of the Marine Resources Program of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Commercial crab is managed through a Tri-state process on the West Coast.

The delayed opening date will give time for the crabs’ shells to fill with more meat. This results in a higher quality product and reduces wastage. It takes about two to three months for an adult male crab to fill-out its new shell following molt in the late summer. If the molt is later in the year, it pushes back the time when crabs are ready to harvest.

The Dungeness crab fishery is the most valuable single-species fishery in Oregon. Annual landings in Oregon are between 4 million and 33 million pounds – last year’s record catch. Oregon accounts for about one-fourth of the total catch from northern California to Alaska.

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