



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

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WASHINGTON COASTAL DUNGENESS CRAB INDUSTRY NOTICE

WDFW is implementing the following change to coastal commercial Dungeness crab regulations effective August 31, 2014:

It is unlawful for any person licensed to fish under a Dungeness crab-coastal fishery license to possess or land crab in excess of 4,500 pounds during any weekly catch accounting period (Sunday through Saturday). See the list of catch accounting periods below.

Any crab taken prior to August 31, 2014, and not landed before 11:59 p.m. August 30, 2014, become part of the August 31 through September 6, 2014 accounting period catch.

The area outside 4 miles remains open for fishing.

Weekly Catch Accounting Periods:

- August 31 through September 6, 2014
- September 7 through September 13, 2014
- September 14 through September 15, 2014

JUSTIFICATION:

The Summer Fishery Management Plan calls for the implementation of management measures intended to protect the Dungeness crab resource when significant amounts of soft shelled crab are present during the commercial crab fishery. The Plan calls for a 2,500 pound weekly landing limit to minimize encounters with soft-shelled Dungeness crab while continuing to allow for some commercial fishing opportunity.

In recent weeks WDFW staff has sampled a mix of good quality and soft shelled crab during our shipboard trips with commercial crab fishermen and during dockside sampling. Crab condition data has met the criteria specified in the Summer Fishery Management Plan to trigger a weekly landing limit. We believe this measure is necessary to minimize encounters with soft shelled crab and reduce handling mortality. However, there appears to be higher quantities of good quality crab on the grounds to support a slightly higher trip limit than specified in the Summer Fishery Management Plan.

To address mortality associated with handling soft-shelled crab while allowing the commercial fishery to operate economically during the last two weeks of the 2013-14 season, **WDFW is imposing a modified weekly landing limit of 4,500 pounds.**