

Coastal Dungeness Crab Tri-State Committee 2014 Meeting

Decisions and Next Steps Summary

Date: May 20-21, 2014

Location: Sacramento, CA

Attendance:

PSMFC: Dave Colpo, Carol Barstow

CDFW: Tom Barnes, Pete Kalvass, Christy Juhasz

CA Advisors: Kirk Younker, Randy Smith, Geoff Bettencourt, Craig Goucher, Mike Cunningham, Vince Doyle, Chris Lawson

ODFW: Caren Braby, Kelly Corbett

OR Advisors: John Corbin, Bob Eder, Joe Speir, Chris Aiello, Rex Leach

WDFW: Heather Reed, Dan Ayres

WA Advisors: Dale Beasley, Libbie Cain, Dwight Eager, Larry Thevik, Jim Long

Additional attendees: Hugh Link, Jim Anderson, Bob Farrell (CDFW enforcement), Bob Puccinelli (CDFW enforcement)

Decisions:

1. Protocol changes
 - A. Eliminated the possibility of a second November test to inform the opening structure decision to clarify that there would be only one test used for each decision making call. It was agreed to target the one November test for completion by November 15, with a hard deadline for completion by November 22. Each state further clarified that they will conduct testing as follows:
 - WA and OR will conduct one round of test fishing, targeted for completion by November 15th but no later than November 22. The results of tests completed by November 22 will be used to inform the decision to open the season on December 1 or delay the opener to conduct additional tests.
 - CA expects to conduct optional early tests beginning in late October. Any ports that meet the minimum meat recovery criteria and minimum poundage requirement (see exception) will not be required to undergo further quality testing. Additional testing for areas that do not reach the minimum meat recovery criteria or that can't be tested due to weather will be targeted for completion by November 15th and no later than November 22. The results of tests completed by November 22 will be used to inform the decision to open the season on December 1 or delay the opener to conduct additional tests.
 - B. Clarified that in the event of season delays, stations that do not meet criteria by November 22 would be re-tested following the same approach, with a single round of testing (the "Second Round") to be completed by December 7 to inform a December 16 opening. Stations that still do not meet criteria would be re-tested following the same approach, with a single round of testing (the "Third Round") to be completed by December 22 to inform a December 31 opening.
 - C. Eliminated the "10-day minimum" time period between pre-season tests.
 - D. Agreed to a state manager technical conference call to occur prior to the beginning of testing around November 5. The purpose of this call is to share plans for testing with a goal to test in a similar time frame, as close as possible, given the difficulties with weather, vessel availability, etc.
 - E. Agreed to allow testing boats to immediately reset gear if they suspect the minimum poundage for a test area might not be met.

2. Other issues;

- A. The Tri-state Dungeness crab Committee agreed to submit a letter to the PSMFC in time for their annual meeting (August 24-27, 2014), supporting the removal of the existing sunset date contained in P.L. 109-479, sec 302 (e), MSA § 306 note (16 U.S.C. 1856 note) regarding the authority of the states of Washington, Oregon, and California to manage the Dungeness crab fishery.
- B. OR and WA will continue discussions with agency managers and enforcement staff to make a final decision on revising the opening of the crab fishery. The current preferred alternative is to change the fishing start time to 9AM by lengthening the presoak period to 73 hours (the time to set gear would remain 8 AM, consistent in all 3 states). CA will remain with the status quo fishing start time of 12AM (i.e.: 64 hour pre-soak).

Oregon and Washington recommendations for the California Dungeness Crab Task Force:

- Since the California advisors and CDFW staff were representing the CA DCTF positions (formulated during the DCTF meeting in April) to the Tri-State Committee, it was decided that OR and WA would discuss the DCTF proposal and provide recommendations at this meeting (and that CA advisors did not need to make recommendations to the CA DCTF).
- OR and WA agreed to support the inclusion of CA District 10 into Tri-State under the following terms:
 - Complete adherence to Tri-State pre-season testing protocols in their entirety, including the same testing protocols, season opening decisions, starting dates, delays and single fair start provision detailed within the protocol.
 - Modification of California statutes to allow a line (or possibly lines) to be drawn within the state of CA to allow for fishing zones due to differences in meat recovery criteria.
 - Recognition that the Tri-State Committee would need to further review, discuss and agree to all modifications of the testing protocol before final approval due to the complexity of incorporating such a large area into the protocol.
- OR and WA also jointly recommended that the CA Dungeness Crab Task Force consider asking the California State Assembly to extend more direct management authority for the Dungeness crab fishery to the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Director.
 - The purpose of this recommendation is to provide CDFW similar rule making authority as WDFW and ODFW to allow for more seamless, minor changes in the management of the fishery within the Tri-State area.
 - Authority provisions discussed include: presoak, start date, start time, management area lines to have the ability to draw new lines for softshell delays, and new delay increments for season start.

Next Steps:

- States approve meeting summary document for Dave to post.
- Modify testing protocols reflecting agreed to changes.
- Each state sign new protocol signature page agreeing to the changes.
- Plan for another meeting one year from now.