

NEWS RELEASE

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Commercial crabbing off coast set to begin Dec. 31

OLYMPIA – The commercial crab fishery will get under way Dec. 31 off the coast of Washington, Oregon and northern California, a month after fishing was delayed to give the crabs' shells more time to harden and fill with meat.

Fishery managers for all three states agreed to open the fishery after new test results showed the crab are nearing harvestable condition.

"We're pleased that all three states agreed to a common fishing schedule," said Phil Anderson, special assistant to the director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "Delaying the fishery will ensure that the consumer gets a high-quality product. And, by opening at the same time, we can avoid the massive movement of boats and gear from one state's waters to the next."

Under the agreement, commercial crabbers can begin setting their crab pots at 8 a.m. Dec. 28, and start pulling them back up at 12:01 a.m. Dec. 31.

Washington's coastal crab fishery extends from the Columbia River to Cape Flattery on the western end of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Dungeness crab supports one of the highest-value commercial fisheries in the state, generating dockside sales ranging from \$29 million to \$56 million during the past five years.

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