

November 22, 2005

WDFW INDUSTRY NOTICE TO:
COASTAL COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERS AND PROCESSORS

**THE OPENING OF THE WASHINGTON COASTAL
COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY IS DELAYED**

PRE-SEASON TEST FISHERY RESULTS

Washington completed the second round of pre-season testing fishing for coastal Dungeness crab condition. Tests for the Long Beach and Westport areas were conducted on November 16 and 17 respectively. The season start date is dependant on a meat recovery rate projected to be 23% on December 1.

Crabs were collected from three stations at each area; strings of pots were set at 15, 30 and 45 fathoms at each station. All crab caught were included in the meat recovery sample. While aboard the charter vessels, WDFW staff collected shell condition data (listed below) using crab that were randomly collected from all depths and stations. The results for both areas are summarized below.

	1A	1B	II	III	Meat Recovery
11-17-05 Westport	16.4%	44.4%	39.1%	0.0%	22.1%
11-16-05 Long Beach	17.6%	36.8%	45.6%	0.0%	20.9%

The results of the first round of testing are below:

	1A	1B	II	III	Meat Recovery
11-1-05 Westport	11.3%	33.8%	54.5%	0.4%	22.1%
11-1-05 Long Beach	6.8%	21.5%	71.6%	0.0%	20.1%

The results show that the rate of improvement in meat recovery from early November to mid-November is quite low. Meat recovery from crab sampled at the Long Beach stations only improved by 0.8% over 15 days. Crab sampled from the Westport stations did not show any improvement during the 16 days between sampling. Based on this information it is not expected that crab will meet the 23% meat recovery rate required to open the season on December 1, 2005. **As a result, the opening of the Washington coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery is delayed and will not open before December 15, 2005.**

Oregon and California also have similar issues with low meat recovery results from areas along their coasts. Policy representatives from the California Department of Fish and Game, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife discussed the issues associated with crab condition and the opening of

the 2005-2006 Dungeness crab season during a conference call on Monday, November 21, 2005. The three state representatives committed to work together to coordinate coast-wide season opening dates in a manner that promotes a fair start for all crab fishers.

Finally, all three states agreed to not open their commercial fishery prior to December 15, 2005 in the waters from Point Arena, California north to the U.S.-Canada border.

In the coming days we will be working with the other two states to determine the appropriate starting dates and any differential opening dates by geographic area that may be necessary. This may include additional testing in the areas of concern. We will update you as more information becomes available

If you have any questions pertaining to this notice please call Heather Reed
(360) 249-4628 ext. 202.