

### Marine Resources Program

**To: Oregon Commercial Dungeness Crab Industry**

**Subject: Fishery News**

**Date: November 5, 2012**

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Commercial ocean Dungeness crab landings into Oregon ports during the 2011-12 season totaled 14.2 million pounds from 6,549 separate landings. Total coastwide landings this past season were lower than the 2010-11 season total of 21.3 million pounds, but similar to those seen in the 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09 seasons, during which a total of 12-15 million pounds were landed each year. In comparison, the 10-year average for total annual landings is 20.2 million pounds (Figure 1). The Newport area led all ports in total pounds landed with over 4.1 million pounds, followed closely by the Charleston, Astoria and Brookings areas with 3.8, 2.5 and 2.2 million pounds landed respectively (Figure 2).

Pot declarations (based on vessels' pot limit since 2006) totaled 112,400 for the 318 Oregon permitted vessels that made landings into Oregon during the 2011-12 crab season. The number of vessels making landings in the fishery throughout the season dropped from 333 vessels during the 2010-11 season, resulting in a slightly reduced number of pots utilized in the fishery (Figure 3).

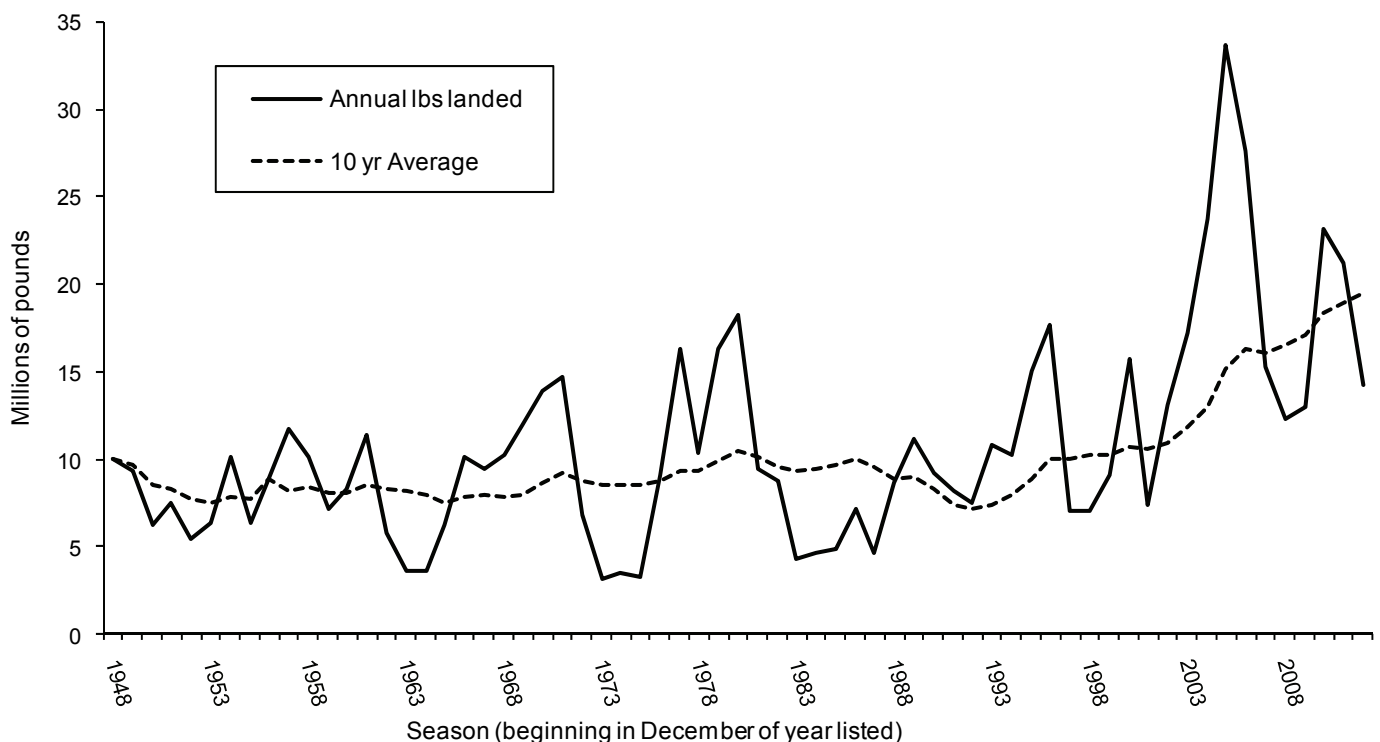


Figure 1. Landings (millions of lbs) per Dungeness crab season compared to the 10 year average.

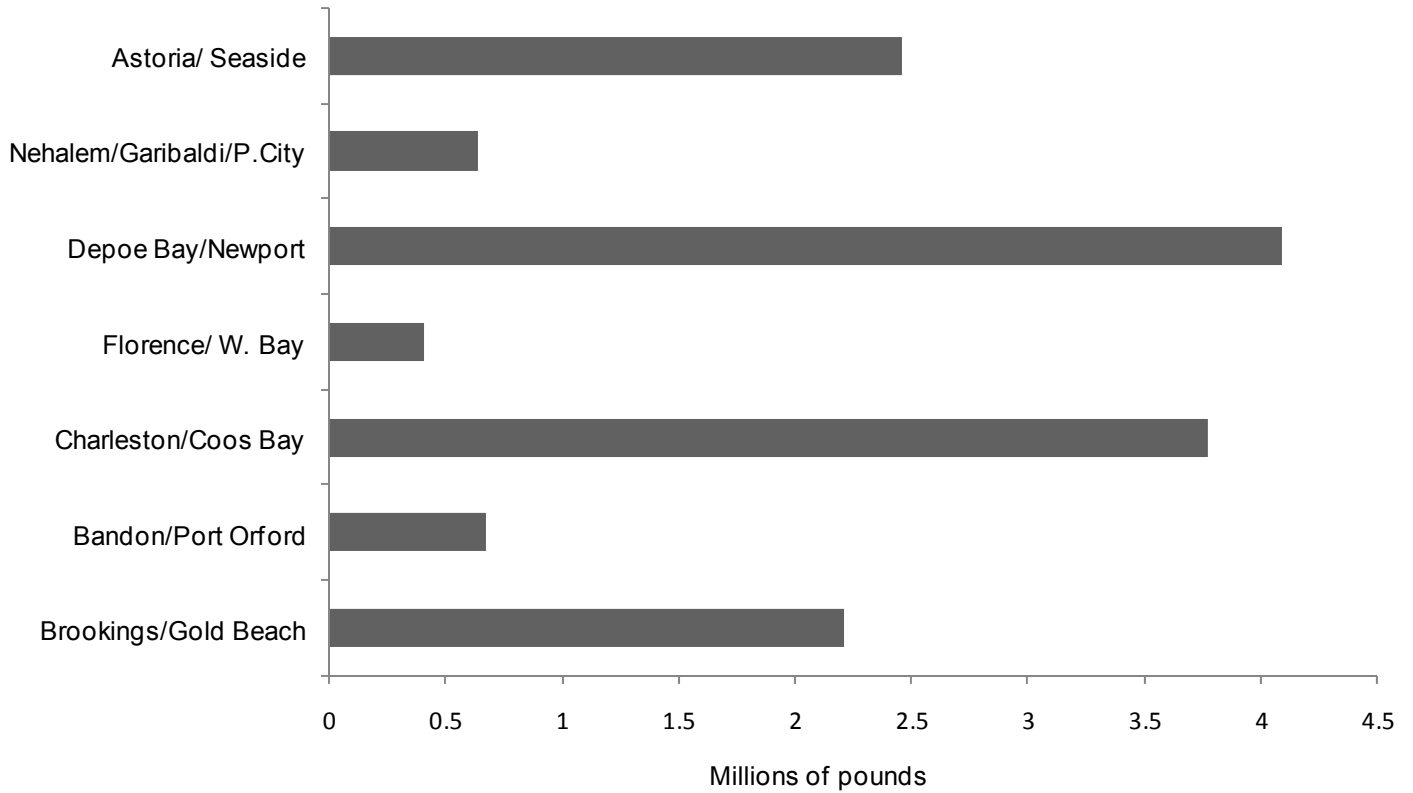


Figure 2. Landings in millions of pounds by port group for the 2011-12 commercial Dungeness crab season.

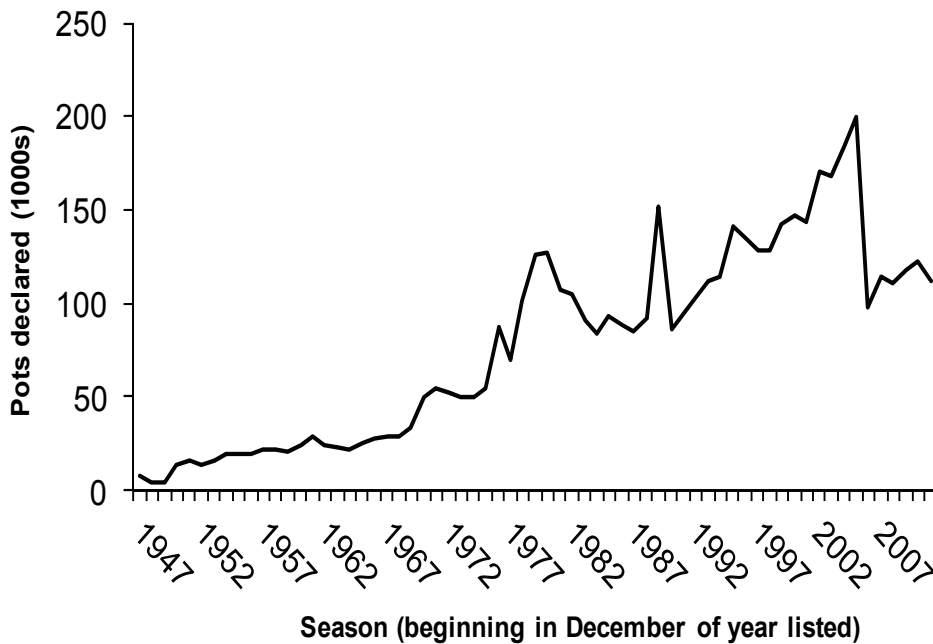


Figure 3. Pots declared by year in the Oregon Dungeness crab fishery. Boats' pot limits were used beginning in 2006-07 crab season.

Month	Million lbs.	Ave. \$ / lb
Dec	6.35	2.3
Jan	4.21	3.2
Feb	1.96	3.4
Mar	0.72	3.9
Apr	0.51	4.2
May	0.31	5.0
Jun	0.11	3.4
Jul	0.06	3.4
Aug	0.03	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>2.95</b>

Table 1. Landings in millions of pounds and average price by month for the 2011-12 Commercial Dungeness crab season.

The season opened December 15, north of Gold Beach, with a negotiated price of \$2.30/lb. This was \$0.30 higher than any negotiated price on record and was locked in for a significantly longer period than usual. The southern area opened with an informally negotiated price of \$3.00/lb on January 15. Ex-vessel value of all crab landings into Oregon during this past season totaled over \$42.1 million with a weighted average price of \$2.95/lb; a 0.65 cent per pound increase from last year's average.

## Pre-season Testing

**2012 Results** - In partnership with the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission (ODCC), the first round of Oregon preseason Dungeness crab quality testing was conducted coastwide, with the exception of the Astoria area, during October 15th – 21st (results in Table 2). The minimum meat recovery rates that must be met (or projected to be met) in each test area are: 23% north of Cascade Head and 25% south of Cascade Head (rounded to the nearest integer). The Astoria test area was not tested during round one since we were unable to secure a boat to conduct the test.

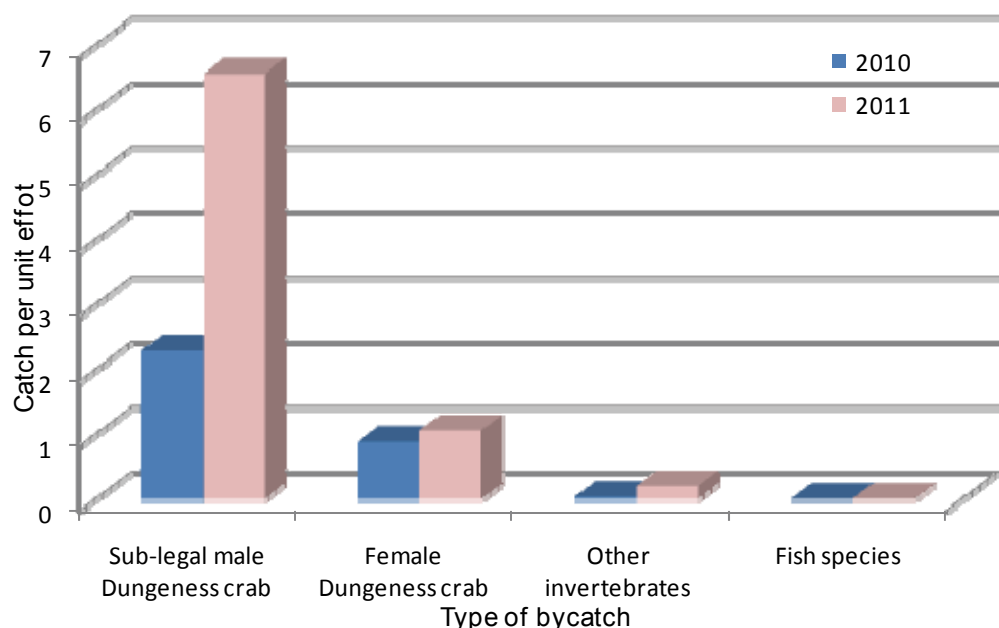
We will be working with ODCC and the commercial crab fleet to ensure that the Astoria area is tested in early November along with the second round of testing for the other six test areas. In addition, we will be collecting samples for toxin testing by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Results of all of these tests will be reported as soon as they are available.

We would like to thank all of those involved with the testing: the staff at Hallmark Fisheries in Charleston, Brookings, and Port Orford; staff at Bornstein Seafoods in Astoria and Newport; staff at Deepwater Seafoods in Garibaldi; the ODCC; ODFW observers; and the captains and crew of the crabbing vessels that make this possible. If you are interested in volunteering for round two (or round three, if there is one), give the ODCC a call as soon as possible, 541-267-5810.

Area	Meat Recovery %
Astoria	not tested
Garibaldi	19.5
Newport	20.3
Coos Bay	24.4
Floras Creek	21.2
Port Orford	19.3
Brookings	17.6

*Table 2. Round one meat recovery percentages from each Oregon preseason test area.*

**Additional Sampling** - During the last few years of preseason testing we have been conducting some additional sampling to help us learn more about the fishery and Dungeness crab. Starting in 2010 we began sampling a subset of the pots fished in each test string to document the quantity and species composition of all species caught in the pots, including female and sub-legal male Dungeness crab. Even though bycatch rates in the fishery are thought to be low, they are not well documented. Documentation of bycatch rates is a key component of all sustainable fisheries, and as such is a condition of the Oregon Dungeness crab fishery's MSC certification. During the first two years of this sampling we sampled 302 pots and measured over 8,000 crab. Preliminary results indicate catch per unit effort (CPUE) of sub-legal male Dungeness crab is the highest of all the categories of bycatch, followed by female Dungeness crab, other invertebrates (sea stars, etc.) and fish species (Figure 4). We plan on having a summary report of these first three years of this project prepared for the second annual MSC fishery audit in February, 2013.



*Figure 4. Coastwide catch per unit effort (catch per pot) of categories of bycatch caught during 2010 and 2011 preseason tests trips off Oregon.*

During preseason testing last year we began collecting tissue samples from female and sub-legal male Dungeness crab for evaluation by Oregon State University researchers. This study is being led by Dr. Kathleen O'Malley, an assistant professor with OSU's Coastal Oregon Marine Experiment Station. The goal of the study is to evaluate the genetic diversity and population structure of Dungeness crab off the west coast. The first report of findings from these investigations is due out in January, 2014, so stay tuned.

## 2012 Commercial Crab Sampling

**Dockside Sampling** - As some of you might remember, ODFW sampled commercial Dungeness crab fishery landings at the dock sporadically throughout the years up to 2004. In an effort to continue building that dataset and to monitor the fishery during the season, we will be starting the crab dockside sampling program up again. We will have three samplers coastwide out sampling your catch from Dec-Apr this crab season. The sampling at the dock will consist of obtaining carapace widths and total sample weights from a certain number of crab (based on size of the offload). The objectives for sampling the fishery dockside include:



- Compare current data to historical data to look for stock trends
- Investigate year class structure of harvest, recruitment trends and relative abundance
- Continue work on MSC conditions and development of documentation of a sustainable fishery
- Evaluate the success of current and future management measures
- Facilitate crab related information channels between ODFW, industry and OSP.

**At-sea Sampling** - The second component of this sampling program is an at-sea voluntary ride-along program to add to our preseason test data, and assess and quantify bycatch rates of female crabs, undersize crabs and other species caught during normal Dungeness crab fishing operations. Our goal this season is to sample bycatch on a couple of ride-along trips on each part of the coast throughout the season. As December is a very hectic time for everyone in the industry, we have planned these ride-along trips to start anytime during the month of January. If you are interested and willing to take out a sampler for a trip this year, please give us a call at your earliest convenience.

Your cooperation and participation in both components of this reinvigorated crab sampling program is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions/comments/concerns/suggestions for improvements as this program unfolds please give us a call anytime as we are very interested in making this program as efficient and useful for the fishery as we can.

## Partnering with ODCC

**Marine Stewardship Certification** - As most of you are likely aware the Oregon commercial Dungeness crab fishery was certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) in December 2010, a 5-year conditional certification that was pursued collaboratively by the ODCC, industry and ODFW. The MSC certification is a science-based environmental standard that offers fisheries a way to confirm sustainability, using a credible, independent, third-party assessment process. In December 2011, the fishery passed its first annual audit, having made significant progress on several of the conditions that were placed on the fishery when it was initially certified in order to maintain the certification. Since the initial audit, the ODFW crab program has continued work in response to a number of these conditions and will be prepared to report progress on each of them for the second annual audit in Feb. 2013. These efforts include: further development of a research plan for the ODFW crab management program, further analysis of potential Limit Reference Points (warning signs that that harvest rates may not be sustainable) for the fishery, and creation and development of a crab fishery sampling program (see above section).



**2012 Derelict Gear Clean-up** - We would like to thank the ODCC for their week long derelict gear cleanup efforts during the first week of October. Although small in scale this year, the annual efforts demonstrate continued commitment by industry to deal with gear unintentionally left out in the ocean. Additionally, the Oregon State Police (OSP) conducted a statewide patrol targeted at commercial crab pots that were still in the ocean after the 14-day grace period at the end of the season. Continued work on this front reduces gear conflicts and navigation hazards to facilitate good relations with other fisheries and ocean users, maintains the fishery's MSC certification by continuing to demonstrate the relatively low impact of the fishery on the environment, reduces chances of marine mammal entanglements, and is ultimately imperative to the future success of the fishery. We look forward to continuing to support industry initiatives to develop larger-scale, creative and sustainable solutions for cleaning up crab gear left out in the ocean.

**Thanks to Nick Furman for 22 years** - We would also like to take this opportunity to personally thank Nick Furman for over 22 years of service as the Executive Director of the ODCC. Over the years, Nick has been a very well respected, diplomatic voice for the crab industry, representing the needs of the fishery and its participants in a variety of state and federal processes. Under Nick's leadership, the crab fishery has undergone significant changes in management of the fishery, market expansion, and MSC certification - all of which have promoted a more environmentally responsible and sustainable Dungeness crab fishery in Oregon. We greatly appreciate Nick's willingness, patience, professionalism and collaboration with us to coordinate and gather industry input on issues that faced the fishery through the years. Thank you Nick for all of your hard work and support, you will be missed.

**Talking Crab Management - Crab Summit 2013?** Every other year since 2005, ODFW and ODCC

have co-sponsored Crab Summits to share information and discuss issues facing the Dungeness crab fishery. These discussions ultimately help guide management decisions for the fishery into the future, so your participation is critical. If industry identifies major issues that warrant a Crab Summit in 2013, we will schedule one for late spring or summer (location and date TBD). If there are topics, issues, comments or concerns that you would like to suggest be discussed at an upcoming Crab Summit, please get in touch with us soon, so that we can decide whether a 2013 Crab Summit is needed. If the decision is to go ahead with one, we will be ramping up planning efforts over the winter, and would like to have as much time as possible to consider your input.

We will be hosting at least one Oregon Dungeness Crab Advisory meeting to help us outline potential issues/topics for discussion at a 2013 Crab Summit; this will help determine if a Crab Summit is needed next year. The ODFW Crab Management Program regularly seeks input from the fleet by consulting with the Oregon Dungeness Crab Advisory Committee (ODCAC) on all relevant crab policy issues. Membership on this committee (listed below) is entirely voluntary and we have tried to represent all sectors of the fleet by having persons from all ports and a diversity of business plan types. We conduct the meetings with a conference call option to accommodate advisors at sea or who are unable to attend in person, and all of the meetings are open to the public. Keep your ODCAC port representative(s) informed about the issues and topics that are of importance to you so that they can help us to decide if a 2013 Crab Summit is necessary, and if so, to make it as relevant and useful to the fishery and its participants as possible. The current members of the ODCAC are as follows:

Ast.	John Corbin	New.	Jeff Feldner	Char.	Jimmy Burns	Brks.	Bernie Lindley	Proc.	Jerry Bates
	Al Gann		Poggy Lapham		Mike Lane	Proc.	Jack Emmons		Susan Chambers
Gar.	Darus Peake	Flor.	Al Pazar	P. Orf.	Chris Aiello		Steve Fick	Agency	Hugh Link - ODCC
	Emily Dunn	W.Bay	Scott Hartzell		Blane Steinmetz		Dave Wright		Lt. Anderson - OSP
New.	Bob Eder	Char.	Tom Nowlin	Brks.	Joe Spier		Mike Manning		
	Bob Spellbrink		Rex Leach		Todd Whaley		Doug Heater		

**Reward for Returned Dungeness Crab Tags** From October 1, 2012 to March 1, 2014, return a tag for \$20 and entry to a raffle for \$2,500 in cash prizes [2 x \$250, 2 x \$500, and a \$1,000 grand prize]. Crab will be tagged in Yaquina Bay starting in October and in the ocean starting in December. This tagging study is part of the **Oregon C.R.A.B. [Collaborative Research to Assess Bycatch] Project**, a collaborative effort by Oregon fishermen and scientists to determine mortality rates of discarded Dungeness crab.



From October 1, 2012 to March 1, 2014, return a tag for \$20 and entry to a raffle for \$2,500 in cash prizes [2 x \$250, 2 x \$500, and a \$1,000 grand prize]. Crab will be tagged in Yaquina Bay starting in October and in the ocean starting in December. This tagging study is part of the **Oregon C.R.A.B. [Collaborative Research to Assess Bycatch] Project**, a collaborative effort by Oregon fishermen and scientists to determine mortality rates of discarded Dungeness crab.

**If you catch a tagged crab, please:**

**Return the tag with the following information:**

- ✓ Date the crab was caught
- ✓ Fishing gear that was used to catch the crab
- ✓ Location where the crab was caught (Lat/ Lon preferred; description accepted)
- ✓ Name, address, phone number, and signature

**To (by mail or in person Monday - Thursday: 8 - 12 and 1 - 5 or Friday: 8 - 12):**  
Oregon C.R.A.B. Project  
OSU Extension Service  
29 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street

**For more information:**  
Visit [www.oregoncrabproject.org](http://www.oregoncrabproject.org)  
Email [crab@oregonstate.edu](mailto:crab@oregonstate.edu)  
Call (541) 961-6166



Thank you for your participation in this research!

**Buoy Tag Recycling**

Lastly, as you are gearing up for this next season please remember that we will recycle your old buoy tags. Unfortunately they still cannot be recycled through your local curb-side recycling programs. However, there is a company near Salem that will recycle them, and will do so for free! This company primarily uses plastics from agricultural industries and manufactures items such as plastic railroad ties. You can bring your buoy tags in to any ODFW office in the major coastal ports and we will transport them in bulk to the recycling center.



**Buoy tag colors for the 2012-13 season:**

- Tier 200 – Orange
- Tier 300 – Red
- Tier 500 – Purple
- Replacements – Gray

**Replacement buoy tags issued each year:**

- 2006-07 – 3647 tags
- 2007-08 – 4273 tags
- 2008-09 – 3005 tags
- 2009-10 – 3907 tags
- 2010-11 – 4371 tags
- 2011-12 – 2802 tags

**Have a Safe and Productive 2012-13 Crab Season!**

We are always interested in hearing from you about your fishery and the issues that are important to you. Please give us a call or stop by our office in Newport anytime.

*Kelly Corbett* Commercial Crab Project Leader (541) 867-0300 x 244  
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*Troy Buell* State Fishery Management Program Leader (541) 867-0300 x 225  
[troy.v.buell@state.or.us](mailto:troy.v.buell@state.or.us)