

NEWS RELEASE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 21, 2015
Contact: Dan Ayres, (360) 249-1209

Commercial crab fishing to open Jan. 4 on Washington coast

OLYMPIA – Washington’s commercial Dungeness crab fishery will open in coastal waters Jan. 4 after a month-long delay, state shellfish managers announced today.

Fishery managers for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) approved the opening in coordination with fishery managers from Oregon and California.

Washington’s commercial fishery opening includes the waters from the mouth of the Columbia River north to Destruction Island as well as Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay. Crabbers can set their pots in this area on Jan. 1. The area north of Destruction Island will open later in coordination with tribal co-managers.

WDFW delayed the fishery opening, initially scheduled Dec. 1, to conduct additional marine toxin testing and coordinate coastal openings with Oregon. Results from these tests continue to show domoic acid levels below the health-safety threshold set by state public health officials, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager.

“We understand the hardship that this delay has caused the coastal crab industry,” Ayres said. “However, it’s important to help make sure that the crab going to the marketplace is safe to eat.”

Domoic acid, a natural toxin produced by certain types of marine algae, has disrupted shellfish fisheries this year along the West Coast. The marine toxin can be harmful or even fatal if consumed in sufficient quantities. Cooking or freezing does not destroy the toxin in shellfish.

The Washington commercial crab fishery has an average annual value of \$38 million.

Recreational crabbing is open in all of Washington’s coastal waters and in Puget Sound, where marine toxins in crab have not been a problem.

Persons with disabilities who need to receive this information in an alternative format or who need reasonable accommodations to participate in WDFW-sponsored public meetings or other activities may contact Dolores Noyes by phone (360-902-2349), TTY (360-902-2207), or email (dolores.noyes@dfw.wa.gov). For more information, see http://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/reasonable_request.html