



U.S. SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL

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Cantwell Secures Major Win for Washington Crab Fishermen

Legislation makes cooperative management of Dungeness fisheries permanent

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A bill led by U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) strengthening Washington’s crab fishery has passed the United States Senate and will now head to the president’s desk for signature into law. The bill permanently extends a decades-long fishery management agreement that has been vital to Washington state’s Dungeness crab fishery.

Without Cantwell’s legislation, crab fisheries in the Pacific Northwest faced an uncertain future without an approved fishery management plan.

“The Dungeness crab fishery is an economic pillar of our coastal communities, supporting thousands of fishing and processing jobs,” Cantwell said. **“By preserving the Tri-State Agreement, we can sustainably manage our crab fisheries for many years.”**

The states of Washington, Oregon, and California cooperatively manage the West Coast crab fishery in federal waters under a tri-state agreement that Congress first authorized in 1998. The act would make that authority permanent. The agreement expired without a replacement in 2016. The Cantwell bill will help reintroduce much-needed stability to the industry, and preserve a sustainable, science-based fishery management program that keeps fishermen fishing and crab stocks thriving.

“The future of West Coast Commercial Fishing is anchored by Dungeness crab, which has added stability and vitality to coastal fish-dependent communities in the face of other struggling fisheries. The crab fleet was happy to work with Senator Maria Cantwell and Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler on this legislation making the Tri-State Agreement permanent,” said Dale Beasley, president of the Columbia River Crab Fisherman’s Association.

Crab populations vary greatly by year, depending on food availability and ocean conditions. The Dungeness crab catch tends to peak every 10 years and can fluctuate by tens of millions of pounds between years. In order to manage the fishery appropriately, managers must coordinate between states to ensure management and conservation goals are achieved.

Washington state's Dungeness crab industry brings \$61 million into the state's economy annually. Crab fishermen in the state harvest an average of 9.5 million pounds of crab per year, supporting more than 60,000 maritime jobs.

"Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission applauds the success of Senator Cantwell and Rep. Herrera-Beutler in preserving this valuable conservation and management program. Our West Coast states have a long history of successfully managing the West Coast's most valuable fishery," said Randy Fisher, Executive Director of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Diane Feinstein (D-CA) are cosponsors of the bill. Representatives Jamie Herrera-Beutler (R-WA-3) and Derek Kilmer (D-WA-6) co-sponsored companion legislation in the House.

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