



State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

48 Devonshire Road, Montesano, Washington 98563-9618 (360) 249-4628 FAX (360) 249-1229

December 21, 2016

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab Fisher:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information regarding the opening of the 2016-17 coastal Dungeness crab fishery in the area south of Klipsan Beach, Washington. As you are aware, crab tested for domoic acid during the pre-season meat condition test fisheries in mid-November revealed that elevated levels of domoic acid were present in several locations along the Oregon coast. As a result, the season opening in the area south of Klipsan Beach, Washington was delayed to collect additional samples for domoic acid in a wider range of depths than initially sampled. Those results confirmed that Dungeness crab samples collected in Washington are below federal action levels and are safe for human consumption.

The most recent domoic acid test results from crab collected in Oregon show that Dungeness crab are now below action levels in all Washington and Oregon areas. Policy leaders from Washington, Oregon, and California met today and agreed to **open the area between Klipsan Beach, Washington and Cape Blanco, Oregon at 9:00 A.M. on January 1, 2017. There will be a gear set period beginning at 8:00 A.M. on December 29, 2016.**

Below are details relative to the season opening that include; gear set, opening, and hold inspection dates, and fair start provisions. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the management measures described below before you begin your fishing operations and stay informed relative to additional changes.

OPENING DATES AND FAIR START PROVISIONS:

Any vessel that fished in the area between Point Arena, California and Cape Blanco, Oregon will be delayed from fishing in the area between Cape Blanco and Klipsan Beach for 30-days after the January 1, 2017 season opening which is January 31, 2017.

Klipsan Beach to WA/OR Border including Willapa Bay:

The coastal Dungeness crab fishery will open to state fishers from Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) to the WA/OR border (46°15.00), including Willapa Bay (*note the western boundary description), on **January 1, 2017.**

- **A 73-hour gear pre-set period starting at 8:00 A.M., December 29, 2016 will precede the opening.**
- **Vessel hold inspections will be conducted on December 31, 2016, starting at noon.**
- **Fishers can begin fishing in this area at 9:00 A.M. on January 1, 2017**
- Fishers participating in the fishery south of Klipsan Beach or in Willapa Bay are subject to reduced pot limits. Fishers with permanent pot limits of 500 and 300 will be allowed to use 400 or 250 pots, respectively. Unused buoy tags must be on board vessels until the temporary pot limit is lifted.
- Vessels that fish in the area between Point Arena, CA and Klipsan Beach or in Willapa Bay before the ocean area north of Klipsan Beach opens are subject to the fair start provisions described below.
- The boundary between the Willapa Bay and the ocean waters is distinguished by a straight line connecting the following coordinates:

*Cape Shoalwater: 46°44.76 N - 124°05.76 W

Leadbetter Point: 46°38.93 N - 124°04.33 W

Klipsan Beach to Destruction Island:

In our November 23 letter we incorrectly stated that the state coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery between Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) and the Queets River (47°31.70) would open after a 64-hour gear pre-set period, the correct opening time is 9:00 am on January 7, 2017 after a 73-hour gear pre-set period. This change was approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2015 and is intended to improve enforceability of the season opening and reduce gear theft. While not implemented for the 2015-2016 season for the area north of Klipsan Beach, the 73-hour pre-set will be implemented moving forward. WDFW will provide an update on the season opening in the Quileute U&A both in the area between Queets and Destruction Island in early January.

- A **73-hour** gear pre-set period will begin at 8:00 am January 4, 2017.
- **Hold inspections** will be conducted starting at noon on January 6, 2017.
- Temporary pot limits in place south of Klipsan Beach will be removed at 8:00 am January 4, 2017.

Destruction Island to U.S.-Canadian Border:

The state commercial fishery from Destruction Island to the U.S. Canadian border will not open before **January 15, 2017**. We will provide you with follow-up information with the specific regulations for this area as soon as possible.

Fair Start Provisions:

Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-52-036) in the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery in the waters from Point Arena, California, to Klipsan Beach, Washington, (including Willapa Bay) before **February 11, 2017** are subject to the **Fair Start Provisions** described below.

- **Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) to Oysterville (46°33.00):** Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-52-036) in the fishery between Point Arena, CA and Klipsan Beach, WA, including Willapa Bay, before the area north of Klipsan Beach opens will be allowed to fish in the area between Klipsan Beach and Oysterville at **8:00 am on January 17, 2017**.
- **Oysterville (46°33.00) to the U.S. - Canada Border:** Licenses and vessels designated to those licenses that fish (as defined by WAC 220-52-036) in the fishery between Point Arena, CA and Klipsan Beach, WA, including Willapa Bay, before the area north of Oysterville opens will be allowed to fish in the area between Oysterville and Destruction Island at **8:00 am on February 11, 2017**.
- **WAC 220-52-036 Definition—Commercial crab fishing:** “Commercial crab fishing” means any taking, fishing, use, or operation of gear to fish for crab for commercial purposes, and includes the possession of crab on the water for commercial purposes, and the landing or initial delivery of crab for commercial purposes.

Other Requirements:

- All license holders will be required to carry, complete, and submit logbooks to WDFW. This information will greatly assist us in managing our fishery in the future.
- Notification to WDFW Enforcement is required when transiting crab through closed areas. Notification is to be made 24-hours prior to entering the area north of 47°00.00 N. Latitude by calling Sgt. Tony Leonetti at 360-485-8149, and reporting the vessel name, operator name, estimated amount of crab to be delivered in pounds, and the estimated date, time, and location of delivery. The following situations will require notification.
 - a. Vessels transiting north of Grays Harbor with crab caught south of Klipsan beach (46°28.00) or Willapa Bay prior to the area north of Klipsan beach opening.

- b. Vessels transiting north of Grays Harbor with crab caught south of Destruction Island (47°40.50) prior to the area north of Destruction Island opening.
- A hold inspection certificate number is required on all fish tickets through February 11, 2017.
- WDFW would like your help, please call the coastal crab hotline (360-249-4628, extension 260) if you witness or have information regarding enforcement violations including fishing in closed areas, starting early, pots without buoy tags, etc.

This information and future updates will also be available on WDFW web page:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/crab/coastal/>

If you have questions regarding the information contained in this letter or other regulations pertaining to the coastal Dungeness crab fishery, please contact Dan Ayres at (360) 249-4628 ext. 209.

We were again faced with high levels of domoic acid in some areas off the west coast that impacted the start of the 2016-2017 season opening. I appreciate the input provided by industry Tri-State representatives, advisors, and industry members that participated in the many discussions and provided input throughout the season opening process. As we manage the coastal Dungeness crab fishery we will keep in mind the high value this resource has to you and our coastal communities and will strive to implement testing protocols that ensure that consumers get crab that are not only the highest quality but also safe to eat. Best wishes for a safe and successful crab season.

Sincerely,



Heather Reed
Intergovernmental Ocean Policy

cc: Michele Culver
Annette Hoffmann
Dan Ayres