

NEWS RELEASE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
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WDFW delays commercial crab fishery on Washington coast due to low meat content

OLYMPIA – State shellfish managers have delayed the opening of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery on Washington’s coast due to inadequate meat in crab shells.

The commercial fishery on Washington’s coast typically opens Dec. 1. Recent testing indicates crabs along the coast do not have sufficient meat in their shells to meet industry standards for harvest. The fishery will be delayed until at least Dec. 16 to allow more time for crabs to fill with more meat.

Another round of testing will take place after the Thanksgiving holiday to determine whether the fishery can open Dec. 16 or will need to be further delayed, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

“It’s not unusual for crabs to need more time to fatten up,” Ayres said. “We’ll re-evaluate in another week or two.”

Contrary to an erroneous news report, WDFW did not delay the commercial crab fishery due to a harmful algae bloom, Ayres said. Algae blooms can cause elevated levels of domoic acid, which can be harmful or fatal if consumed in sufficient quantities. Recent test results indicate crabs along the Washington coast are currently safe to eat.

Recreational crabbing remains open in Washington’s coastal waters as well as in several areas of Puget Sound. More information about recreational crab fishing in Washington can be found on WDFW’s website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/crab/>.

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