



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N, Olympia, WA 98501-1091 • (360) 902-2200 • TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

May 20, 2020

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery Participant:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information regarding changes to regulations pertaining to the Coastal Dungeness crab fishery.

Substitute House Bill 2250 (SHB 2250) was passed by the Washington State Legislature during their 2020 session and has been signed by Governor Inslee. Changes made through this legislation support efforts to reduce the risk of coastal Dungeness crab gear becoming derelict and entangling marine mammals, including Humpback whales which are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. The legislation, in combination with recent regulatory changes adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission, including a reduced pot limit and summer buoy tags, will allow WDFW to expand the derelict gear recovery program to authorize gear recovery earlier in the year and prior to the close of the regular season. This proactive measure will allow crab fishers to recover gear that is not properly marked with a summer buoy tag, thereby reducing derelict gear and decreasing the potential for whale entanglements.

WDFW staff is in the process of implementing the provisions of SHB 2250 into state regulation. Details of the regulatory changes are available on WDFW's rule making webpage at this link: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regulations/development#pending>. Due to the effective date of the legislation and the timing of the permanent rule making, derelict gear recovery will be allowed in early August this year. Specific details on participation will be included in a follow-up letter. In subsequent years, gear recovery can be considered as early as May 1. Permit requirements will be the same as the original program and will include the reporting and registration of all gear recovered. The permit provisions will allow for the continued protection of license holders from legitimate gear theft while still allowing for gear recovery.

This rule is being proposed under an expedited rule-making process that will eliminate the need for the agency to hold public hearings, prepare a small business economic statement, or provide responses to the criteria for a significant legislative rule. If you object to the use of this expedited rule-making process, you must express your objections in writing. Written comments may be e-mailed to: Rules.Coordinator@dfw.wa.gov or mailed to: Michele Culver, Post Office Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200. Written comments must be received by July 6, 2020. If you have any questions about this notice, please contact me at 360-902-2487 or Heather.Hall@dfw.wa.gov

Sincerely,

Heather Hall
Intergovernmental Ocean Policy Coordinator

Cc: Michele Culver, Rules Coordinator
Dan Chadwick, Enforcement Captain
Dan Ayres, Coastal Shellfish Manager