

Coastal Dungeness Crab Tri-State Committee

Meeting Summary

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

Meeting Participants

Chair: Dave Colpo

Tri-State Representatives: Sonke Mastrup (CDFW), Caren Braby (ODFW), Heather Hall (WDFW)

California:

Agency advisors: Christy Juhasz (CDFW), Sonke Mastrup (CDFW), Joanna Grebel (CDFW), Ryan Bartling (CDFW)

Industry advisors: Randy Smith (Crescent City), Zach Rotwein (Trinidad), Mike Cunningham (Eureka), Tom Estes (Fort Bragg), Dick Ogg (Bodega Bay), Jimmy Anderson (Half Moon Bay), Rick Harris (Pacific Choice Seafood)

Washington:

Agency advisors: Dan Ayres (WDFW), Dan Chadwick (WDFW Enforcement), Victoria Knorr (WDFW),

Industry advisors: Dwight Eager, Dale Beasley, Jim Long, Larry Thevik, Matt Beese Paul Burrill

Oregon:

Agency advisors: Kelly Corbett (ODFW), Troy Buell (ODFW), Brittany Harrington (ODFW)

Industry advisors: Paul Garrett (Port Orford), John Corbin (Astoria), Bob Eder (Newport), Joe Speir (Brookings), Scott Hartzell (Coos Bay), Gary Motsinger (Garibaldi)

Additional meeting participants: Johnathan Gonzalez (Pacific Choice Seafood), Brian McHale, Susan Chambers

Meeting Summary

- I. **Pre-Season Testing Protocols Decision** - Agreement by all three states to modify the protocol to reduce the meat yield criteria south of Cascade Head from 25% (rounding allowed) to 24% (no rounding)

Rationale: To increase flexibility in the protocol to open areas earlier to avoid later opening and having increased pots in the water later into the seasons when there is higher risk of whale entanglements.

- There was recognition that everyone wants to maintain a high-quality product and that this measure is trying to compromise between the threat of whale entanglements and threat of eroding our meat quality standard.
- A retrospective analysis of past season openings indicate that this change would have only affected a very small number of past seasons' opening testing and structure for opening/delaying.

Timeframe: Implementation in the 2020-21 crab season.

- II. **Tri-State crab line marking coordination** – Discussion by all three states about the rationale and goals for line marking. Agreement on goals for current and future line-marking regulations: (1) identifiable and accurate, (2) visible (primarily in photographs), (3) reasonable and cost-effective, (4) coordinated across West Coast Dungeness crab fisheries and potentially other fixed gear fisheries, (5) environmentally friendly.

A wide-range of specific components of line-marking were discussed including colors, number of marks, locations of marks, how to mark, prohibitions of other states marks as outlined in the line marking discussion paper. The states agreed there is interest to continue these discussions and keep each other updated on any line-marking regulations as they are developed (CA and OR) or modified (WA).

- III. **Tri-State buoy tag coordination updates** - This discussion started at the 2019 Tri-State meeting and was about consideration of coordinating/streamlining buoy tag shapes and colors to make them more distinctly different from each other as possible. One of the issues that came up last Spring was an entanglement with a gray whale which had a “house” shaped tag which is the shape used by both Oregon and Puget Sound Dungeness crab fisheries. There was a difference of opinion on the color, but the shape was relatively clear. It had to be classified unidentified based on the shape being the same. This spring WDFW and ODFW discussed options of coordinating between distinct shapes and colors for each states’ fisheries. Starting next season, Oregon will retain the same shape used since buoy tags were implemented, Puget Sound fishery will switch over to using the oval tags and all of the coastal WA state tags will be square shaped. Oregon also decided to streamline tag colors for next season as well. The main season tags will be one color for all pot tiers while the replacement tags will be a different color. California is unable to implement this for next season as they are in the second season of their biennial tags and may consider planning for this next year.

- IV. **Gear innovation updates** – Each state provided brief updates on gear innovation initiatives within their state. California described the gear innovation framework that is built into their RAMP program that lays out criteria, with a focus on detectability, ability to retrieve gear, benefits to reducing entanglements, and enforceability. They also developed an authorization process and part of that has an electronic vessel monitoring component. They described that the purposes of their system is to ensure the gear benefits whales, but is also practical. They are getting lots of interesting ideas about gear innovation and want to manage those ideas by creating clear standards/expectations for everyone involved. Both Washington and Oregon have described their focus for the short term has been the development of their conservation plans but continue to be supportive of their fleets pursuing gear innovation.

- V. **Impacts of COVID-19 on the Dungeness crab fishery**

- A. Processing capabilities for 2020-21 season - Industry representative have pointed out that many crab processors are unable to process the crab held in their freezers as they normally would to satisfy the restaurant market (with the current wide-spread closures of restaurants). This could prevent processors from buying crab during the upcoming 2020-2021 season. However, some members who were in attendance have learned that measures are already underway including asking the Department of Agriculture to purchase crab and other seafood to help relieve market pressure.
- B. Federal disaster relief criteria - This discussion was requested by Washington to discuss concerns over each state's crab fishery qualifying for CARES Act disaster funds by meeting the federal (MSA) disaster relief criteria of 35% loss relative to past seasons. While some individual fishers may meet this criterion, it will likely be difficult for most state Dungeness crab permit holders. There was some disagreement over the possibility of getting a congressional change to this threshold and how to best influence such a change. When asked if Tri-State would support a change in this threshold, the state representatives agreed that such support would better come in the form of a letter from the Governors' level and would make their chains-of-command aware of this concern.