

## NEWS RELEASE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

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### Fish and Wildlife Commission seeks public input on proposed changes to Coastal Dungeness Crab Policy

OLYMPIA — The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission is seeking public input on proposed updates to its Coastal Dungeness Crab Policy. The public is invited to review and submit comments on the draft policy through Oct. 15.

Dungeness crabs support Washington's most valuable commercial fishery, as well as popular recreational fisheries. The value of state landings for the 2023-24 [coastal commercial Dungeness crab](#) season was \$66.8 million. [Coastal recreational crabbing](#) is open year-round, with pot closure dates varying by area. These crabs remain abundant on the Washington Coast, though harvest may fluctuate from year-to-year.

"The Coastal Dungeness Crab Policy provides guidance to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to promote species conservation, as well as the economic well-being and stability of commercial and recreational crabbing," said Lorna Wargo, WDFW's intergovernmental ocean policy coordinator. "The policy has not been revised since it was adopted in 1999, and the proposed changes would modernize the document and address new needs."

Proposed policy changes aim to:

- Address the risk of marine life entanglement in crabbing gear, focusing on humpback and blue whales and leatherback sea turtles. WDFW is developing a Conservation Plan and seeking an [Incidental Take Permit](#) under the federal Endangered Species Act.
- Support management of the recreational Dungeness crab fishery. WDFW has implemented a monitoring program to estimate coastal recreational harvest, enhance understanding of the fishery, and fill an important data gap.
- Improve the fishery's climate resiliency. WDFW has hired a new climate and ecosystem research scientist to evaluate how climate research could inform fishery conservation and management.

The [draft policy](#) is now available for public review, and comments may be submitted through the [PublicInput webpage](#). A virtual public meeting will be held from 6-7:30 p.m., Oct. 15. [Register for the meeting](#) through Zoom.

WDFW staff will present public feedback to the Fish and Wildlife Commission during a hybrid meeting Oct. 24-26 in Ellensburg. Information on how to register to provide comments during the meeting will be made available on the [Commission meeting webpage](#).

All members of the public are invited to share their perspectives and participate in WDFW public feedback opportunities regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, language proficiency, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, status as a veteran, or basis of disability.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife works to preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities.

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