



April 5, 2019

2018-19 Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery Closure: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is the commercial Dungeness crab season closing early?

A: Pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 8276.1(c), the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife has determined that the California commercial Dungeness Crab fishery is being conducted in a manner that poses a significant risk of marine life entanglement. The closure is necessary to reduce the risk of entanglement to migrating whales on our coast.

Q: When will the commercial Dungeness crab fishery close?

A: The 2018-2019 commercial Dungeness crab season will close statewide (all management zones) on April 15, 2019.

Q: Is the recreational Dungeness crab fishery or other trap fisheries closing too?

A: This closure only applies to the commercial Dungeness crab fishery. Recreational (including commercial passenger fishing vessels) Dungeness crab, recreational and commercial rock crab, and other trap fisheries are not affected by the closure.

Q: How long can I make commercial Dungeness crab landings?

A: All Dungeness crab must be landed by 11:59pm on April 15, 2019.

Q: When do I need to have my commercial gear out of the water?

A: All gear (lines, pots, buoys) needs to be out of the water by 11:59pm on April 15, 2019. This includes un-baited gear, gear where the trap opening has been wired open, and gear that is staged nearshore.

Q: What if I am unable to remove my gear by the April 15th deadline due to vessel breakdown or hardship? Can I request assistance from another vessel?

A: Pursuant to Title 14 CCR § 132.2(a)(F) a waiver may be granted by the department to retrieve another vessel's crab traps under the following conditions:

1. The Dungeness crab permitted vessel is incapacitated due to a major mechanical failure or destroyed due to fire, capsizing, or sinking, or;
2. Circumstances beyond the control of the permit holder created undue hardship.
3. A request for the waiver shall be submitted in writing to the department's License and Revenue Branch.
4. A copy of the waiver approved by the department shall be on board the vessel making the retrieval.
5. The waiver may include conditions such as time period to conduct retrieval, landing prohibitions or any other criteria the department deems necessary.

A waiver can be requested from Ruth Flores, Commercial Fishing Analyst, at the Department's License and Revenue Branch at (916) 928-7470 or email Ruth.Flores@wildlife.ca.gov

Q: Where can I find details about the recent lawsuit filed against the Department?

A: Details on the lawsuit, including the settlement agreement reached by the Department, Center for Biological Diversity, and Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, can be found here: www.cdfgnews.wordpress.com/2019/03/26/entanglement-settlement-protects-whales-sea-turtles-and-californias-crab-fishery/

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: Additional information will be posted on the Department's webpage as it is made available: www.wildlife.ca.gov/crabs