

Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture Crab Hearing – March 29, 2017
Talking Points, California Dungeness Crab Task Force

Provided by Rachelle Fisher, Strategic Earth Consulting Senior Associate and DCTF Administrator

- My name is Rachelle Fisher and I serve as an Administrator of the California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF).
- Thank you for the opportunity to provide this year's update on behalf of the DCTF.
- The 2016-2017 season was another difficult season as domoic acid continued to plague the fishery. The industry continues to discuss mechanisms to lessen the negative impacts of closures due to domoic acid.
 - A concern brought up by many DCTF Members (both commercial and recreational fishermen) was the difficulty in prepping for the season openers as areas opened with very little advance notice resulting in dangerous fishing conditions. DCTF Members have expressed interest in working with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to develop sampling and opening protocols that would allow fishermen opportunities to better forecast when the season will open to ensure the season opener encourage safer fishing practices.
 - Another concern we've heard is the concentration of effort in small areas due to the nature of opening areas as they clean up. While many DCTF Members are grateful for the state's efforts to ensure more fishing opportunities, there have been suggestions on how to lessen the impact of small area openers. The exact mechanism to address this issue has yet to be agreed upon and the DCTF looks forward to continuing these conversations and providing recommendations in a future report.
 - There have also been concerns expressed about enforcement this year of fair start clauses as some fishermen fished multiple openers without waiting the mandatory 30-day waiting period.
 - The DCTF Administrative Team will continue working with the liaison to the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture and CDFW as the need for legislative adjustments to address these situations arise.
- The DCTF continues provide guidance and feedback to CDFW on the implementation of Senate Bill 1287. DCTF Members have expressed the need for the lost fishing gear recovery program to be scalable to be responsive to regional needs and the type(s) of gear pulled, involve entities in addition to CDFW (e.g., port associations) to help implement the program, reduce costs, ensure efficiency, and consider a provision to account for catastrophic gear loss and hardship on an individual or case-by case basis. CDFW has developed a number of options for implementing the program and is continuing to engage the DCTF and its Executive Committee in guiding the program's development.

- Following submission of the January 2017 report, the California Ocean Protection Council is no longer funding the DCTF. As explained in the DCTF's 2017 report that was shared with the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture, there continues to be widespread support among the DCTF and many members of the industry on the value of the DCTF and an interest in continuing the organization into the future.
 - The Nature Conservancy has generously offered to fund the DCTF through July 2017. CDFW is currently exploring its ability to allocate funds from the Dungeness Crab Account to support the DCTF's administration in both the near and longer-term.
 - The DCTF is also investigating other longer-term funding opportunities and potentially updating the structure of the DCTF. Both of these items will likely require legislation in the 2018 legislative session. The DCTF plans to work with CDFW and the liaison to the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture to ensure their feasibility.
 - The DCTF looks forward to also sharing recommendations for statutory changes to the DCTF's structure in a January 2018 report. The report may also include recommendations related to a number of sunseting Dungeness crab regulations and potentially recommendations for other statutory changes.
- In addition to administering the DCTF, Strategic Earth also has the privilege of managing the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group to address the issue of whale entanglements. The Working Group has identified a number of research opportunities to better understand the issue of whale entanglements and is working to connect researchers with the industry for data collection and sharing opportunities. The Working Group is also working closely with Senator Jackson on the development of Senate Bill 290. There is a Working Group overview 1-sheet document available online with more details.
- Myself and my colleague, Kelly Sayce, look forward to sharing more updates as the DCTF and Working Group continue their efforts throughout the year.
- On behalf of the DCTF and the Working Group, I would like to thank Senator McGuire and the Joint Committee for the opportunity to speak today.
- I am available if you have any questions.

For more information about the DCTF, including all meeting summaries and reports, please visit the DCTF webpage: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2009/04/dungeness-crab-task-force>.

For more information about the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group, please visit the DCTF webpage: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group/>.