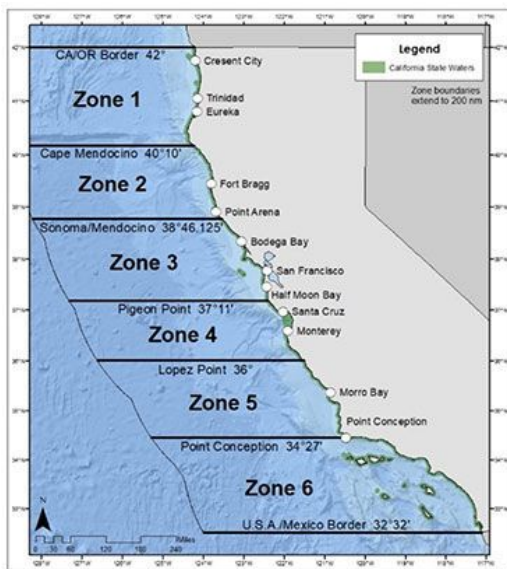


## CDFW opens commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery statewide but continues partial recreational crab trap restriction

December 22, 2022



The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will open the commercial Dungeness crab fishery statewide on Dec. 31, 2022. Fishing Zones 3-6 (all areas south of the Sonoma/Mendocino county Line) will open under a 50 percent trap reduction on Dec. 31, 2022 at 12:01 a.m., with a 64-hour gear setting period to begin on Dec. 28, 2022 at 8:01 a.m.

This trap reduction will help reduce risk of entanglement as humpback whales continue to migrate to winter breeding grounds. Commercial Dungeness crab vessels operating in Fishing Zones 3-6 must understand and comply with the restrictions by reviewing the CDFW Declaration (PDF).

Any commercial Dungeness Crab vessel fishing in or transiting Fishing Zones 3-6, regardless of fishing location, is subject to the 50 percent reduction and must have at least half of their valid buoy tags for the current fishing season onboard and available for inspection by CDFW at all times until the trap reduction is lifted.

Fishing Zones 1 and 2 (Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte counties) had been delayed due to poor meat quality results but recent tests (PDF) indicate crab are ready for market. The fishery will open on Dec. 31, 2022 at 12:01 a.m., with a 64-hour gear setting period that will begin at 8:01 a.m. on Dec. 28, 2022.

“Our department appreciates the ongoing partnership and input from the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group and the numerous researchers and federal agency partners that inform the Risk Assessment Mitigation Program,” said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham. “Through this partnership, CDFW has conducted four risk assessments this season and coordinated the collection of the best available science to protect whales while providing fishing opportunity for this iconic fishery.”

CDFW is continuing the temporary recreational crab trap restriction in Fishing Zones 3, 4, 5 and 6 due to presence of humpback whales and the potential for entanglement from trap gear. The recreational crab trap restriction for Fishing Zones 1 and 2 was lifted on Nov. 28, 2022.

The recreational fishery has been open statewide since Nov. 5, 2022, allowing crabbers the opportunity to harvest Dungeness crab in advance of the commercial fishery. CDFW reminds recreational crabbers that take of Dungeness crab by other methods, including hoop nets and crab snares, is still allowed during a temporary trap restriction.

Available data indicate whales remain in Fishing Zone 3, particularly in waters around Point Reyes and the Farallon Islands. As a result, Director Bonham is also issuing a Fleet Advisory for Fishing Zones 3-6 and reminds both the commercial and recreational fishers to avoid setting gear in areas where whales are transiting or foraging and to follow best practices, as described in the Best Practices Guide (PDF).

CDFW anticipates the next risk assessment will take place on or around Jan. 18, 2022, at which time Director Bonham will re-evaluate the commercial trap reduction and temporary recreational crab trap restriction in Fishing Zones 3-6.

For more information related to the risk assessment process, please visit CDFW’s Whale Safe Fisheries page or more information on the Dungeness crab fishery, please visit [www.wildlife.ca.gov/crab](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/crab). For more information regarding the 2022-2023 commercial Dungeness crab season, please see CDFW’s Frequently Asked Questions (PDF).