

Local crabbers crabby about crab season

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Dungeness crab season in California opened this past weekend, but you might not have noticed the big vessels departing the Harbor.

All crabbers with whom The Triplicate spoke expressed their concern for anonymity, with pricing and operating on a fair and level playing field. Many of the commercial vessels have yet to begin the season, instead waiting for Oregon vessels to depart, en masse mid-January. According to the local crabbers, this delay may also present a different set of problems.

Commercial vessel captains and owners were reluctant to speak with The Triplicate and share their concerns for fear of economic reprisal from the contracted, exclusive buyer of commercial crab, Pacific Choice. The fisherman cite the \$2 per pound offered price as unreasonable.

California diesel fuel is priced at \$6 per gallon, while Oregon crabbers can fill up diesel fuel at \$2.99 per gallon. Another issue expressed by the fishermen is the concern of unintentionally snagging a migrating whale.

If this happens, the state via the Department of Fish and Wildlife could shut down the season. The mammals began their migration to the warm waters of Mexico, last week. Whale-watching activist groups have already begun their observation along the Oregon coastline for any apparent irregularities. As many as 17,000 whales are heading to their Mexican breeding grounds. About 30 whales per hour will pass by Del Norte County's coastline.

A climate of fear pervades the crabbers' mode of operations and threatens their livelihood. Last week, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife boarded a Eureka vessel and reported the meat quantity mass of crab increased by 1.25 percent over the previous week.

Several fishermen expressed skepticism of the DFW monitored report. In its defense, Pac-Choice justification for the initial low price per pound is its concern in purchasing "hollow " crab with diminished meat content.

Most commercial crabbers are choosing to wait for the Oregon crab season to be begin in two weeks. According to the California crabbers, this delay allows the properly DFW permitted-Oregon crabbers the opportunity to lay down their pots in the Golden State.

The good news is Dungeness crab are plentiful.

The 2023 Dungeness Crab season terminates June 15.