

## ODFW prohibits taking of sea stars

March 27, 2022



The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Commission voted Friday, March 18, to change shellfish regulations to prohibit harvest of sea stars and increase the daily bag limit for non-native European green crabs to 35. These changes are now in effect.

During the meeting, ODFW's shellfish program leader Stephen Rumrill presented a package of four proposed changes. Proposed changes to shellfish rules include prohibiting the taking of sea stars, increase the daily catch limit of European green crab, require electronic fish tickets for bay clam fisheries, and establish a landing limit for gaper clam for the dive fishery in Yaquina Bay.

"Oregon's shellfish fisheries are diverse," Rumrill said. "First with regard to the recreational fisheries, we allow harvest of a diverse group of about 30 different species."

These groups include Dungeness crab, Red Rock crab, clams and more. Sea stars and European green crab are also included in recreational fisheries.

Rumrill said multiple species of sea stars have experienced mass mortality along the west coast since 2013 due to Sea Star Wasting Disease. This is coincident with changing ocean conditions.

“Some species of sea stars, like the ochre star, have recovered somewhat,” Rumrill said. “Other species of sea stars have not recovered at all.”

There has been a 90 percent coastwide decline of sunflower sea stars after Sea Star Wasting Disease.

“NOAA Fisheries is currently considering a petition by the Center for Biological Diversity to place them on an Endangered Species List, pending a decision in 2022,” Rumrill said.

Existing ODFW rules allowed the take of 10 sea stars per person per day, Rumrill added.

“This is a prudent management action at this time to demonstrate the commitment to conservation,” Rumrill said of the action.

European green crabs are a recent aggressive invasive species with the potential to disrupt communities of native shellfish. The mid-sized shore crab inhabits the mid-region of estuaries. They can be green, brown, yellow, red or blue in color but are easily identified by three prominent bumps between their eyes and five spines along the side of their carapace.

“[They were] first observed in Coos Bay in 1997,” Rumrill said.

Additional regulations for commercial bay clam fisheries were also approved at the meeting, including the requirement for electronic, rather than paper, fish tickets and designation of a harvest area and annual landing cap for the commercial gaper clam dive fishery in Yaquina Bay.