

Dungeness Crab season begins January 5

January 1, 2024



The commercial Dungeness crab season commences in Del Norte County, this week. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFWD) announced the Dungeness season is now open in zones 1 and 2, Sonoma County line to the Oregon border. The delay in zones 3-6, South of the Sonoma / Mendocino will continue to be restricted.

Multiple delays in opening the Crab season have been attributed to excessive humpback whale entanglements and the high number of whale sightings, according to the DFWD Assessment and Mitigation program.

Recently, an endangered Pacific Sea Turtle became entangled and drowned in commercial crabbing gear. The recreational fishery opened on November 4 with hoop nets and the recreational Crab was lifted in zone 1, California's most northerly zone.

According to the National Fisheries Service, 75 percent of reported whale entanglements are fatal as the giant mammals can drag the heavy fishing gear for months, hindering their ability to dive, feed, breed and survive. CDFW reported 16 separate humpback and gray whale entanglements in California, four entanglements were identified as associated with commercial crabbing nets.

A total of 24 whales have become entangled along the West Coast for calendar year 2023. The NMFS proposes to upgrade the California commercial Dungeness crab Fishery to Category 1, a designation reserved for fisheries that have a frequent likelihood of seriously injuring or killing marine mammals.

The next DFWD Assessment is scheduled January 11.