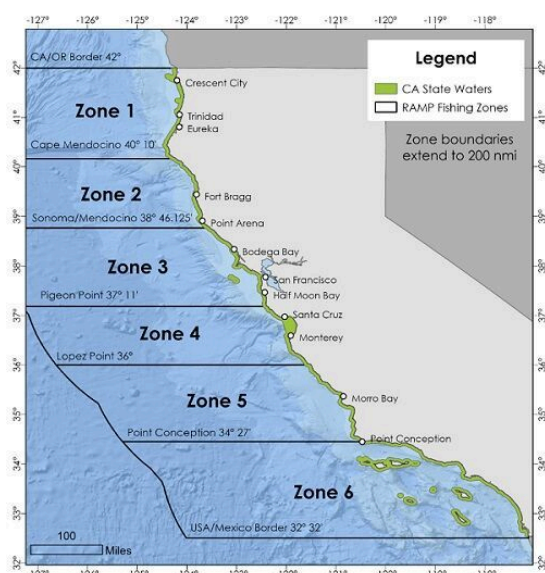


Commerical Dungeness Crab Fishery is closed off of Central California to protect humpback whales

March 30, 2023



California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Director Charlton H. Bonham has assessed entanglement risk under the Risk Assessment Mitigation Program (RAMP) and announced a fishery closure for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in fishing zones 3, 4, 5 and 6 (Sonoma/Mendocino county line to the U.S./Mexico border) effective at noon on April 15, 2023.

The take and possession of Dungeness crab is therefore prohibited after noon on April 15, 2023, in fishing zones 3-6.

This season closure is being implemented to minimize entanglement risk for humpback whales as they return to forage off the coast of California and in response to several entanglements that occurred during March and April of 2022. Based on historical migration patterns, CDFW anticipates humpback whales will begin arriving in the coming weeks and has determined this action is needed to avoid entanglements during the same period that occurred last season.

In addition, CDFW has authorized the Lost and Abandoned Gear Retrieval Program to begin removing commercial Dungeness crab traps left in the water beginning April 21, 2023, at 6 a.m. in zones 3, 4, 5 and 6.

“The fleet has done an impressive job helping CDFW manage entanglement risk in the commercial fishery and appreciates the high level of involvement to inform the risk assessment process,” said CDFW Director Bonham. “We applaud the Working Group for their dedication and continued focus on the long-term viability of the fishery that helps ensure we protect future opportunities to bring Dungeness crab to Californians and provide protection for whales and sea turtles off our coast.”

Fishing zones 1 through 6 also remain under a Fleet Advisory for both the commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries. The recreational fishery remains open to crab traps north of Point Arguello, Santa Barbara County, but may be subject to a future trap restriction when humpback whales return to forage during the spring and summer.

In addition, CDFW reminds all commercial and recreational fishery participants to implement best practices, as described in the Best Practices Guide (PDF). CDFW also reminds all anglers to be prepared to act quickly to remove fishing gear from remaining open areas should entanglement risk become elevated. For more information related to the risk assessment process, please visit CDFW’s Whale Safe Fisheries page.

For more information on the Dungeness crab fishery, please visit CDFW’s Crab page, including FAQs (PDF) for the 2022-23 commercial fishing season and FAQs for the new recreational crab trap regulations.