

Advisory issued for commercial crab fleet

February 11, 2025



A fleet advisory for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in all waters off Oregon was issued Jan. 30 by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Marine Resources Program.

A humpback whale entangled in multiple sets of commercial crab gear from Oregon was reported off the central Oregon coast on Jan. 6, marking the first humpback entanglement attributed by the National Marine Fisheries Service to Oregon commercial crab gear this year.

This follows a record high of four entanglements, involving three humpback whales and one fin whale, attributed to Oregon commercial crab gear in 2024.

Given these events and the high number of crab lines in the water during the first months of the season, ODFW is issuing this fleet advisory. Crab fishing vessels should remain vigilant and move or avoid setting gear in areas where whales are transiting or foraging to minimize risk of entanglement as much as possible. This advisory is effective immediately and remains in effect through the end of the crab season or until superseded.

In its advisory statement, ODOT said, “We remind the fleet of the crab fishing best practices to help reduce risk of entanglements at all times, but especially when entanglement risk is elevated during times of higher crabbing effort or when higher numbers of Endangered Species Act-listed humpback whales are present off Oregon.” Remember to:

- Remove any fishing gear you are not actively tending and promptly remove all gear from the ocean when finished crabbing for the season.
- Use the minimum amount of scope required to compensate for tides, currents, and weather.
- Adjust the length of buoy lines when moving pots to shallower water to maintain taut vertical lines.
- Minimize surface gear and ensure no excess line is floating at the surface.
- Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of large feeding aggregations of whales.
- Maintain gear to ensure lines and buoys are in good working condition and clearly marked.
- Bring derelict gear to shore in-season. If unable to retrieve, report the location of derelict gear to ODFW.

Crabbers are asked to share this advisory and reminders about crab fishing best practices to reduce risk of marine life entanglements. ODFW also asked them to consider reporting whale sightings using the WhaleAlert app and sharing the locations of unusually high whale or sea turtle activity with ODFW and with other fishers.

All entangled marine mammals or sea turtles should be promptly reported by calling 1-877-SOS-WHALE (1-877-767-9425). Keep a safe distance and do not attempt disentanglement.

For more information, contact Brittany Harrington, 541-819-9246 or Brittany.L.Harrington@odfw.oregon.gov, or Kelly Corbett, 541-270-5083 or Kelly.C.Corbett@odfw.oregon.gov