

Oregon's commercial Dungeness crab fishery opens Jan. 15 from Cape Falcon to Cape Arago

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Oregon's commercial Dungeness crab fishery season opens from Cape Falcon to Cape Arago on Jan. 15 after having passed all tests for the crab being ready to harvest. The season opens Feb. 1 from Cape Falcon north to Washington State in accordance with the Tri-State Protocol.

Meat fill now meets or exceeds criteria in all areas of Oregon, and biotoxins are below alert levels in all crab tested from Cape Arago north. Domoic acid testing of crab will continue from Cape Arago south to the California border as test results today showed elevated levels of the biotoxin in that area.

ODFW works closely with the crab fishing industry, the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture on testing and season openings. ODFW also coordinates with California and Washington to help create an orderly start to the season within the Tri-State region.

Tim Novotny with the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission stressed the importance of being able to deliver a level of certainty in the product to the marketplace to start the fishery, both for industry and consumers to have

confidence in the product. That comes through rigorous preseason testing and only opening regions where crab are ready for consumption.

"Oregon's Dungeness crab fishery has been recognized worldwide for its sustainable fisheries practices for generations now. The work we do with ODFW and the hard work and cooperation of the fleet helps us continue to work to solidify our reputation on sustainability, which is a huge benefit for the fleet and coastal communities year-round," Novotny said.

Novotny and Caren Braby, ODFW's Marine Resources Program Manager, say generally the fleet and industry support later season openings when necessary to ensure crab are ready. This season has been just such a situation and industry has overwhelmingly supported waiting until now for the season to start.

"Look, everyone wants to start Dec. 1," Novotny said. "But the fishermen know that this process sets a high bar on purpose, so consumers know they're getting the highest quality and safest product possible," he said.

Braby agrees.

"I'm proud of the crab fishery and our management of this iconic symbol of the Oregon coast," she said. "By working with industry on the problems we've faced – from biotoxins, whale entanglements, and climate change – we're crafting a stronger fishery that will stand the test of time. Steady collaborative management fostered an environment in which the fishery's value and reputation continue to grow."

The earliest the commercial crab season can open by regulation is Dec. 1 pending meat fill and biotoxin results. In recent years, that has been rare – 2021 was the first time since 2014 the fishery opened Dec. 1.

During 2020-2021, the season opened in stages (Dec. 16, 2020 south of Cape Falcon; Feb. 15, 2021 north of Cape Falcon). Fishermen brought in 12.2 million pounds of Dungeness crab coastwide with an ex-vessel value of \$60.6 million. The 2021-2022 season brought in just over 17 million pounds of crab with a \$91.5 million ex-vessel value.