

# Washington Coastal Dungeness Crab Fishery Management



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October 2009

# Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

- The department operates under a dual mandate from the Washington Legislature to:
  - Protect and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats
  - Provide sustainable, fish and wildlife related, recreational and commercial opportunities
- Department policy is guided by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission composed of nine citizen members appointed by the Governor.
- Department operations are led by a Director and an Executive Management Team. The Director is appointed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission

# Coastal Dungeness Crab Management -Overview

## Management Objectives

- The Fish and Wildlife Commission approved management objectives for coastal Dungeness crab in 1999. These objectives outline goals and policies for coastal Dungeness crab management.

# Management Objectives

## -Goals

- Protect reproductive capacity of the stock
- Involve commercial fishing industry representatives in the management of the fishery
- Protect public health
- Maximize the economic benefit from the resource
- Adopt regulations which seek to achieve safe and orderly fisheries

# Management Objectives

## -Goals

- Provide a sustainable Dungeness crab fishery of high quality product consistent with the “even-flow” legislative mandate
- Provide support to industry buyback initiatives
- Protect Dungeness crab habitat

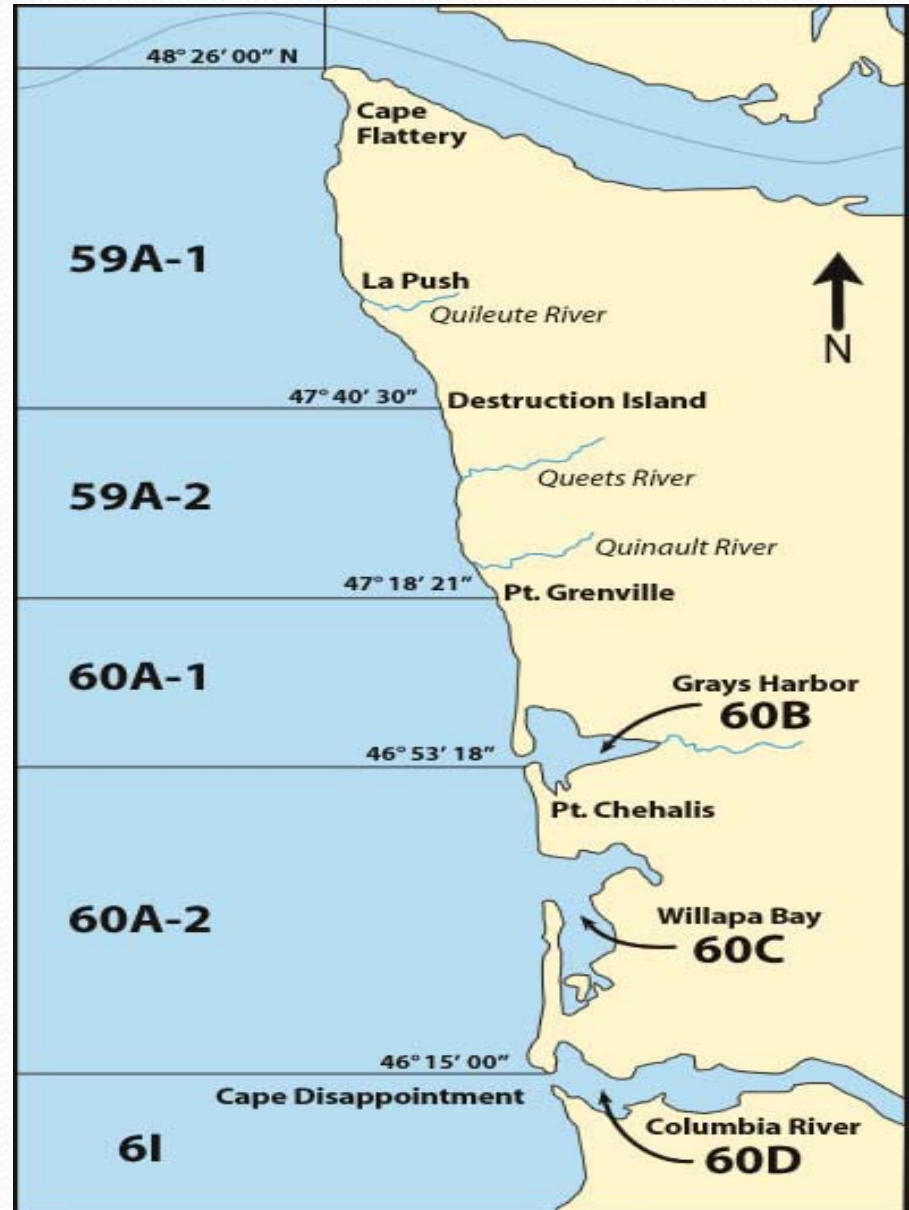
# Management Objectives

## -Policies

- Comply with federal court order relative to treaty / non-treaty sharing of coastal shellfish resources
- Manage the fishery to primarily benefit the commercial fishery
- Cooperate with other states' fish and wildlife agencies
- Manage the coastal Dungeness crab fishery consistent with the preferred alternative in the Even Flow Harvest Management Plan

# Coastal Crab Fishery

- Washington's coastline is approximately 140 miles long, extending from the US Canada border to the WA-OR border.
- There are 225 state coastal commercial Dungeness crab licenses in a limited entry fishery.
- Washington co-manages the coastal Dungeness crab fishery in the area north of Pt. Chehalis with four treaty tribes



# Washington's Coastal Crab Management

- Resource protection based on 3-S management
  - Summer fishery management plan July – Sept. 15
- Tri-State management coordination
- Coastal Dungeness crab Advisory Board since 1999
  - Approximately 15 members / member selection attempts to mirror overall fleet profile (vessel size, home port, landings etc...)
  - Members serve a 2-year term
  - 5 members also participate on the Tri-State Committee
  - Approximately 10 meetings per year
- Effective July 1, 2009 WDFW eliminated the dedicated crab manager position due to budget restrictions



# Management Background: 1994

- Limited Entry
  - Washington State Legislature enacted legislation that established limited entry for the coastal Dungeness crab fishery.
  - The legislation also directed WDFW to develop a long term management plan to create stability in the fishery.
- Rafeedie Decision
  - Judge Edward Rafeedie ruled to uphold treaty tribes rights to harvest up to 50% of the available shellfish resources within their Usual and Accustomed Fishing Grounds and Stations (U&A)

# Management Background:

## 1996

- Limited entry to the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery was finalized resulting in a total of 232 coastal crab licenses (currently 228)
- WA, OR and CA were granted authority through the Magnuson Steven's Act to manage the commercial crab fishery in state and federal waters. Recent re-authorization of the MSFCMA extended state management authority through 2016.
- The "Rafeedie Decision" upheld treaty tribes rights to 50% of the harvestable shellfish surplus.

# Evenflow Management

- In spite of implementation of limited entry, the commercial crab fishery continued to see high early season harvest rates
- The early season harvest rates made it difficult to meet the mandate of sharing harvest opportunity with treaty tribal fishers.
- A coastal Dungeness crab Advisory Board was established to work with WDFW to develop management measures that would help bring stability to the fishery

# Evenflow- Preliminary Discussions

- What is *evenflow*?
- How do we get there?
- Pot limits
- Weekly or monthly landing limits
- Lights out
- Eliminate vessel length extensions
- License stacking
- Buyback

# Pot Limits-

- What data to use?
  - Historical catch based on fish tickets
  - Hold inspection data/ historical pots fished has been recorded during hold inspections
  - Vessel length
  - Structure
  - Across the board limit or tiered?
  - If tiered, how many tiers

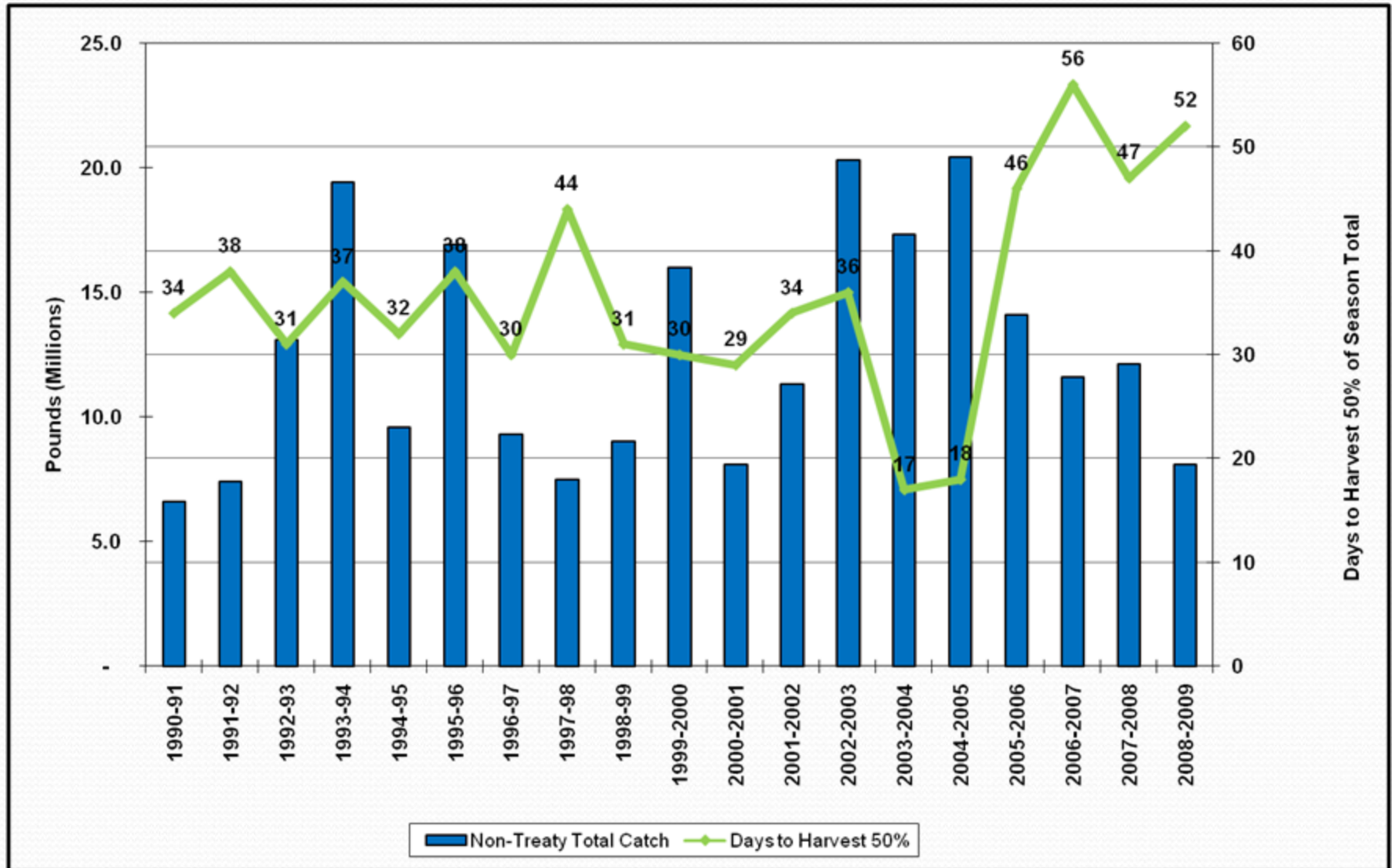
# Final Pot Limit Program

- 2 tiered: 300-500 pots
- Tier assignment based on historical catch during 3-year period
- Pot limits applied to all vessels fishing in the waters adjacent to WA coast regardless of the state they were licensed in
- Buoy tags
  - Not implemented immediately due to cost issues
  - Initial issuance of tags prior to season
  - Replacement tags available at the beginning of the season
  - New 2-year tag program starting with the 2009-2010 season

# Pot Limit-Results

- Did pot limits reduce the early season harvest rate?  
*NO*
- Did pot limits change the dynamics of the fishery?  
*NO*
- Were pot limits a waste of time? *NO*

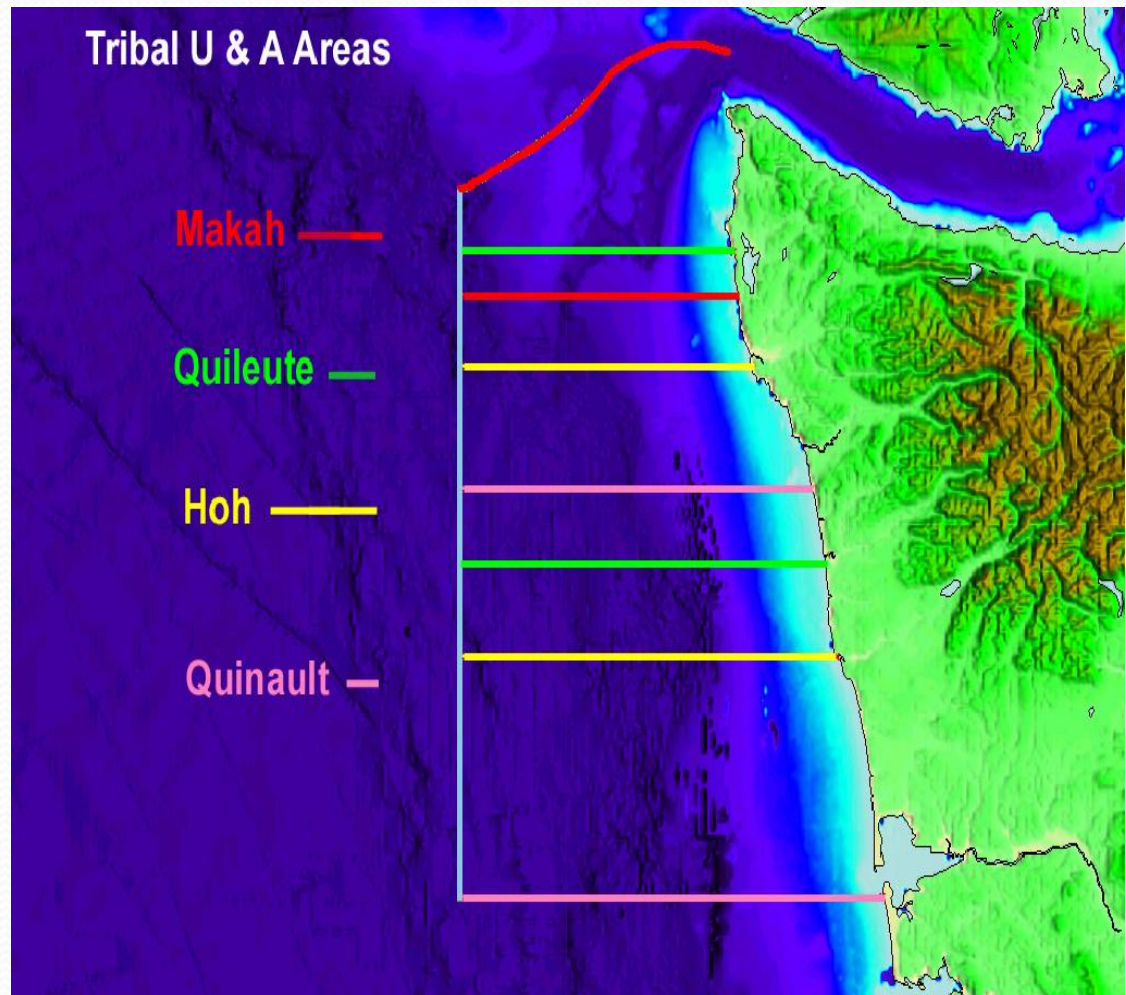
# State catch and number of days to harvest 50% of the season total





# State-Tribal Co-Management

- WDFW co-manages the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery with 4-coastal treaty tribes
- Each tribe has separate usual and accustomed fishing grounds and stations (U&A) but some U&As overlap each other
- Tribes are entitled to harvest up to 50% of the available crab in their U&A

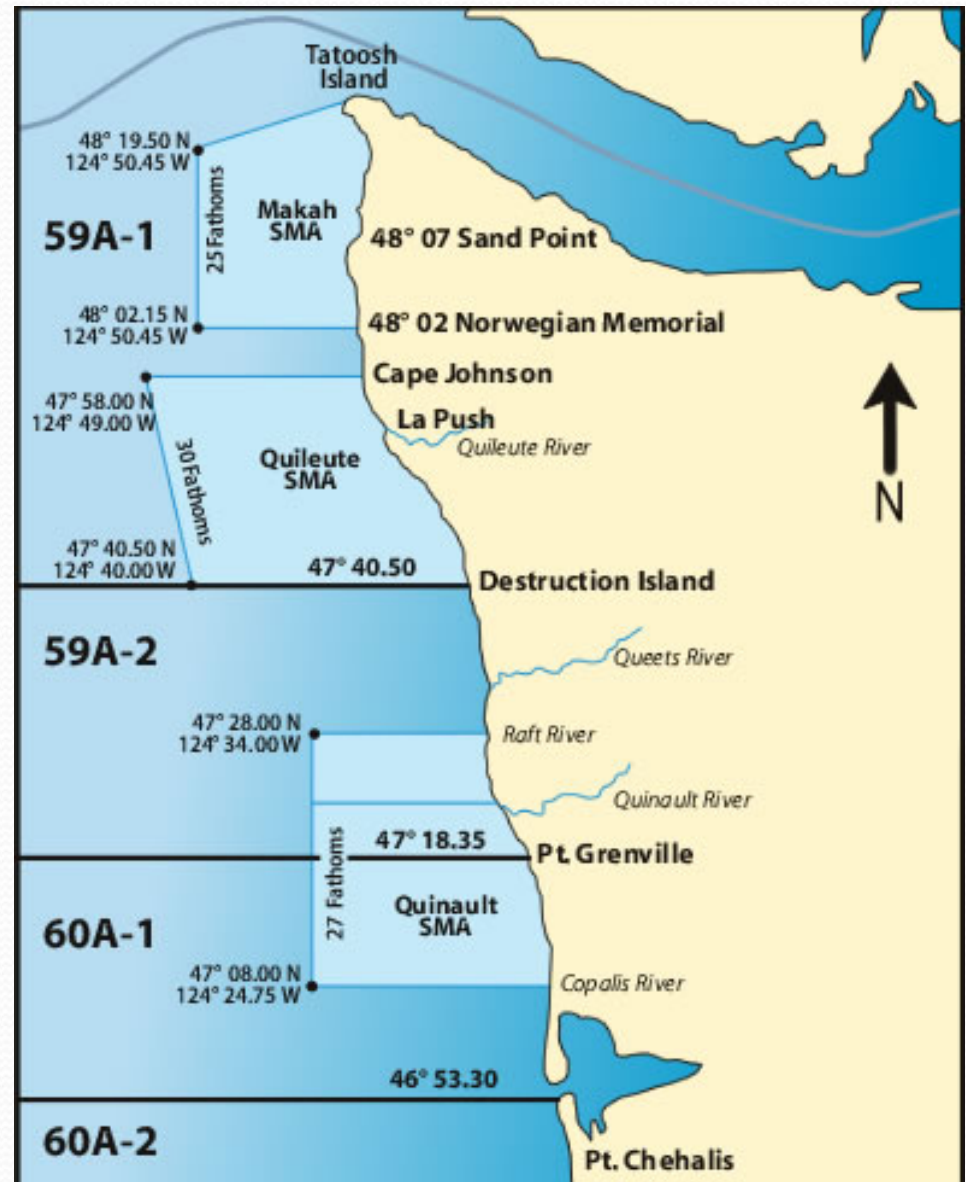


# State Fishery Restrictions

WDFW negotiates state-tribal harvest management plans with each tribe individually. Only three tribes actively participate in the coastal fishery.

Approximately 500 square miles are closed to state fishers for the first several months of the season

The Quinault SMA has remained closed to state fishers during most, if not all of the last three seasons

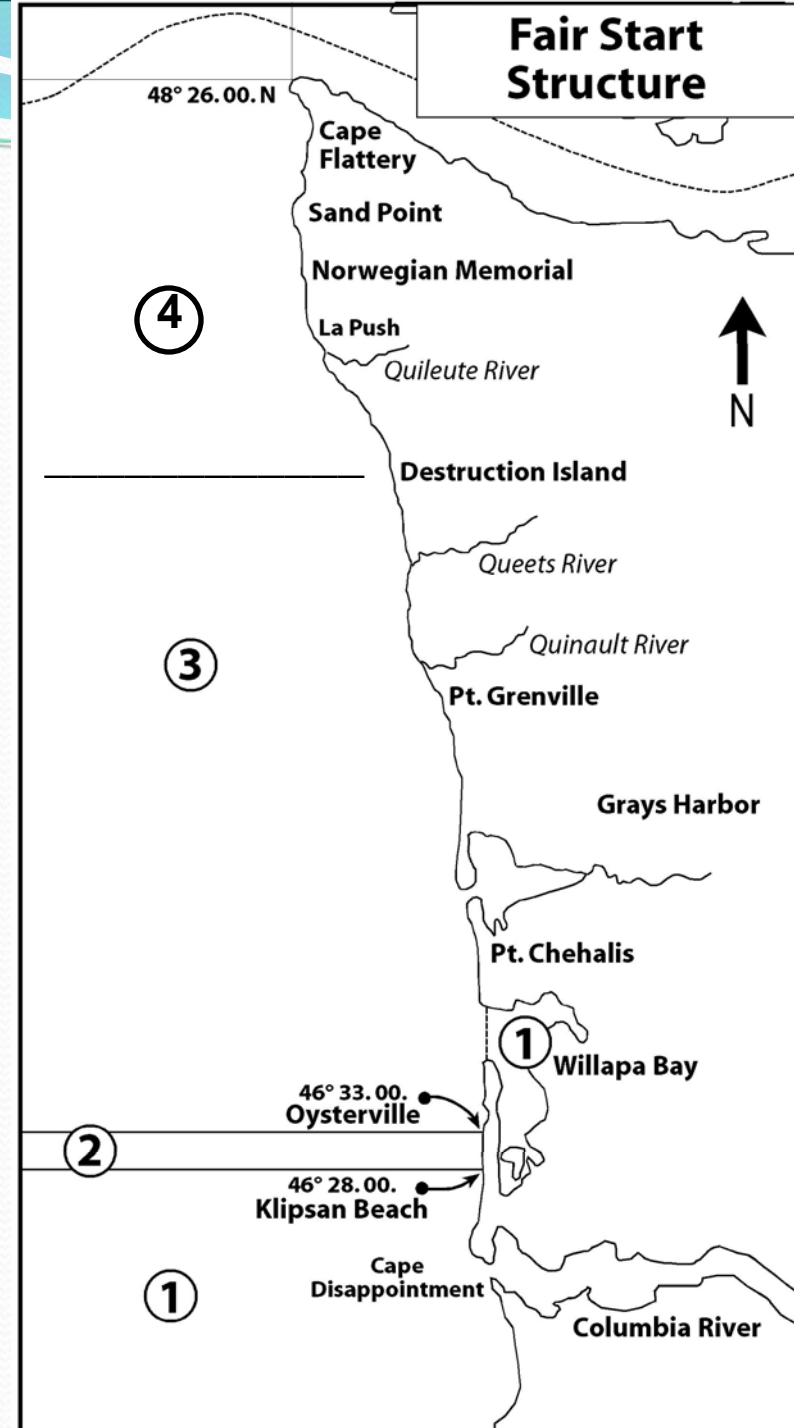


# Fair Start Structure

2006 Area	2006 Open	2006 Delay
Area 1	Dec 1	
Area 2	Jan 8	10 days
Area 3	Jan 8	30 days
Area 4	Jan 16	18 days

2007 Area	2007 Open	2006 Delay
Area 1	Dec 1	
Area 2	Jan 2	10 days
Area 3	Jan 2	35 days
Area 4	Jan 26	20 days

2008 Area	2008 Open	2008 Delay
Area 1	Dec 1	
Area 2	Jan 15	10 days
Area 3	Jan 15	35 days
Area 4	Jan 15	20 days

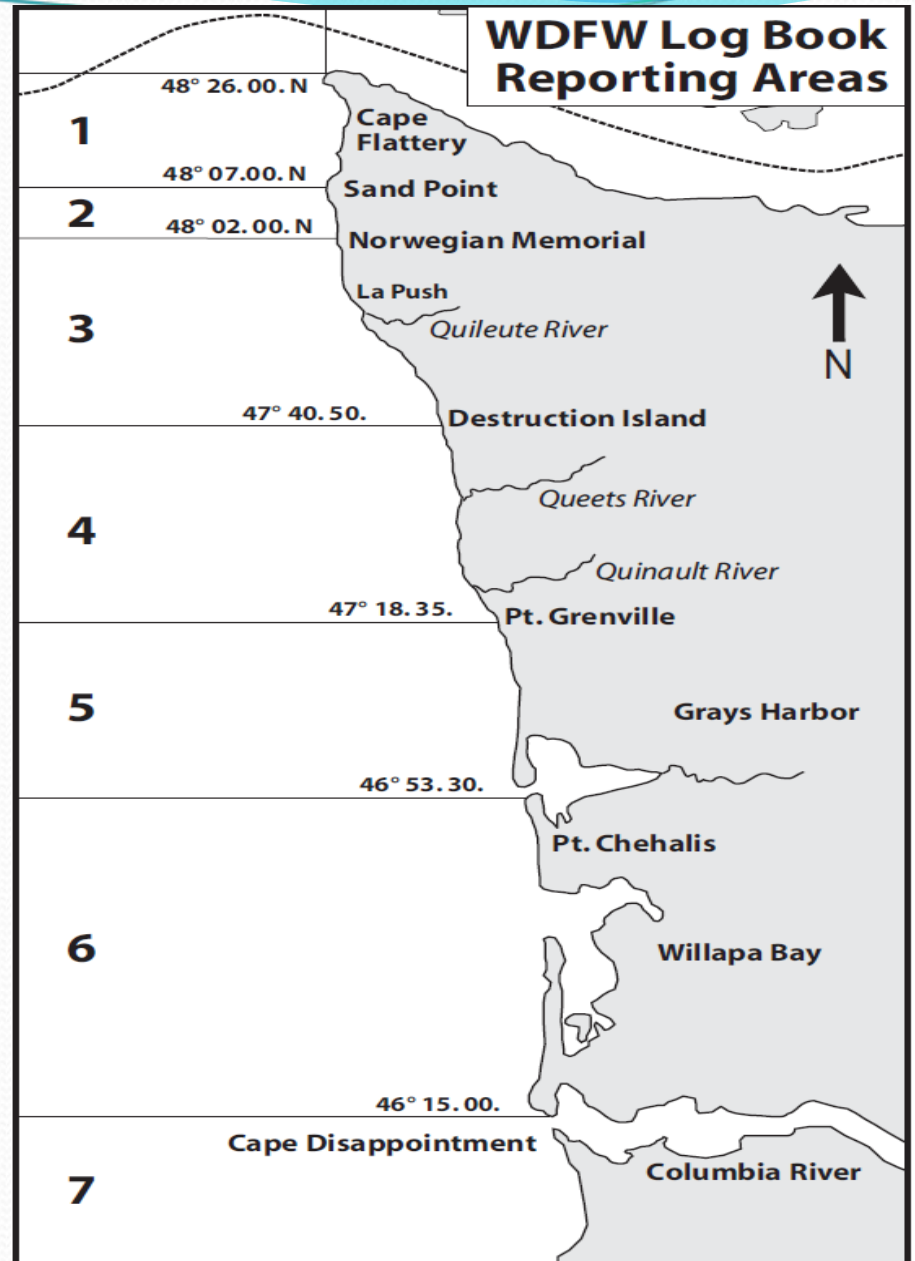


# Logbooks

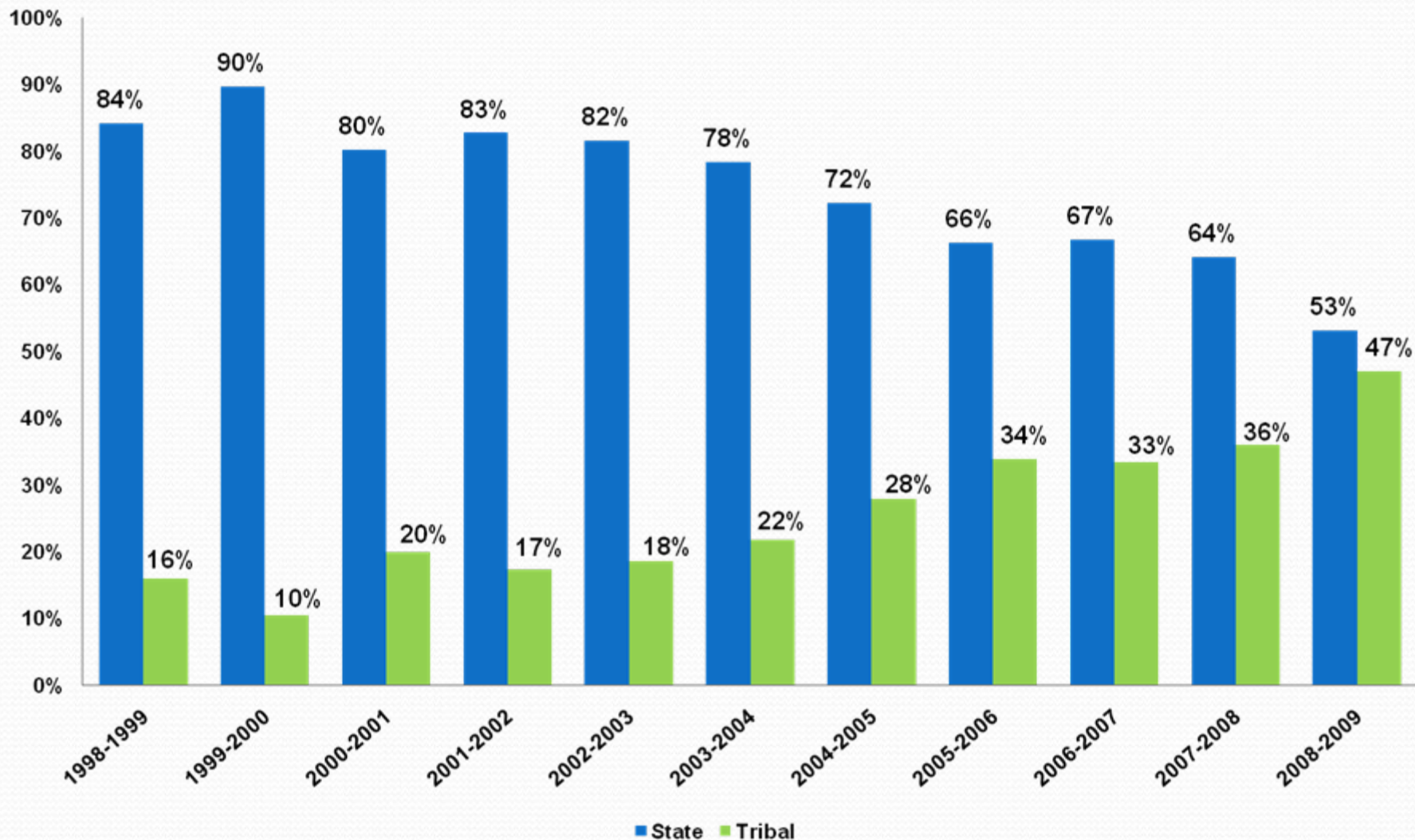
WDFW implemented a logbook program in 2006 to better inform managers on state catch in co-managed areas, particularly where tribal U&A's overlap

Initial logbook requirements were very general, required information on estimated catch by area, and less than or greater than 30 fathoms

Revised logbooks for 2009-10 with space for additional information



# State-Tribal Catch Sharing

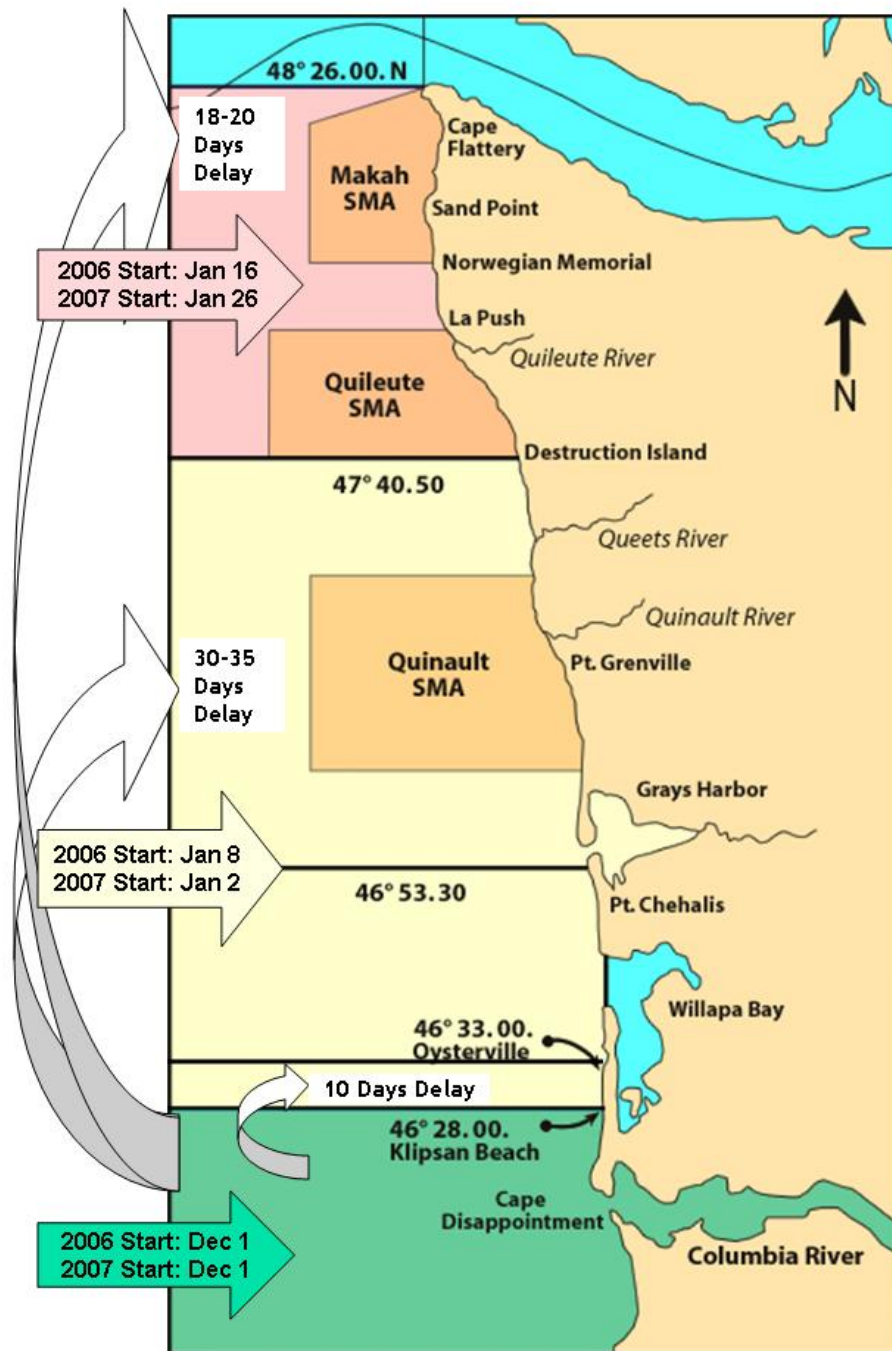


# Season Opening Structure- Fair Start

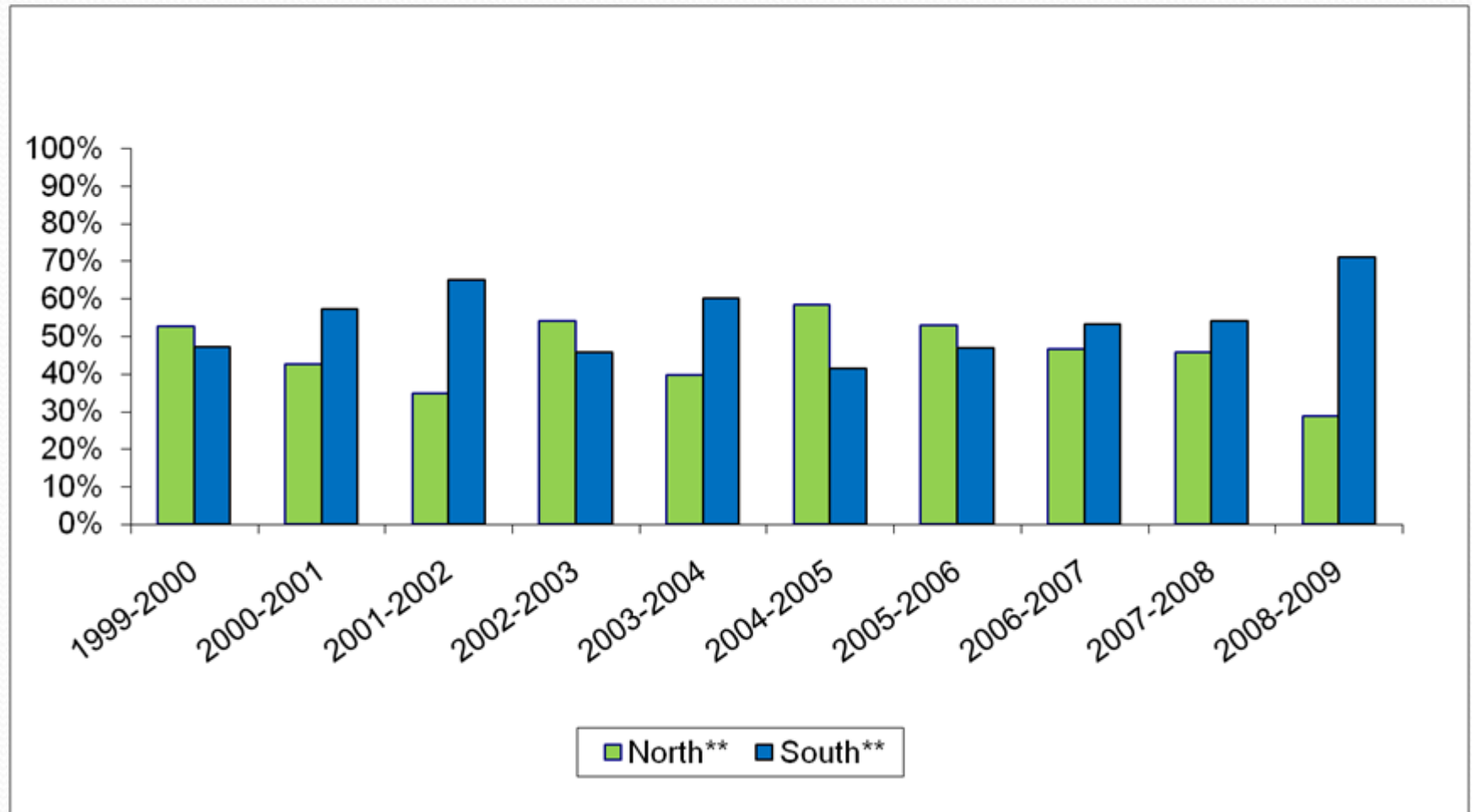
- Vessels that fish in the area that opens, prior to the delayed area opening, would be subject to a stand down provision that would prohibit the vessels from fishing in the delayed area for a period of time between 10-60 days from the date the delayed area opened.
- The number of stand down days would be determined in consultation with industry representatives and be based on the objective of achieving a fair harvesting opportunity by all Washington licensed fishers.

# Washington Commercial crab Season Openings

- Last three seasons have opened progressively north to south
- Line at Klipsan Beach very controversial
- Eliminating fair start provisions has not been an option
- 2008-09 state season did not open north of Klipsan Beach until January 15, 2009

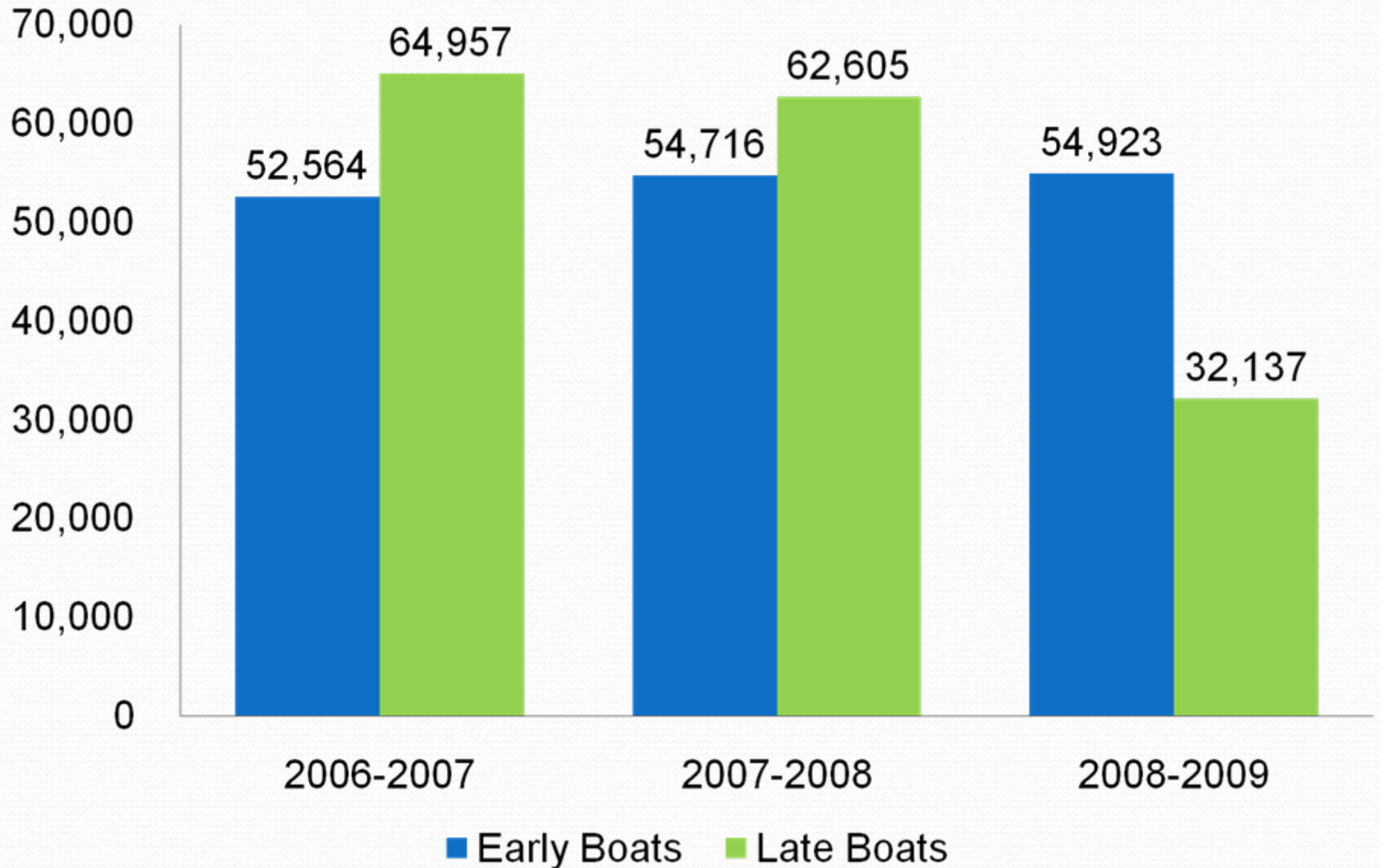


# State Catch- N. and S. of Pt. Chehalis

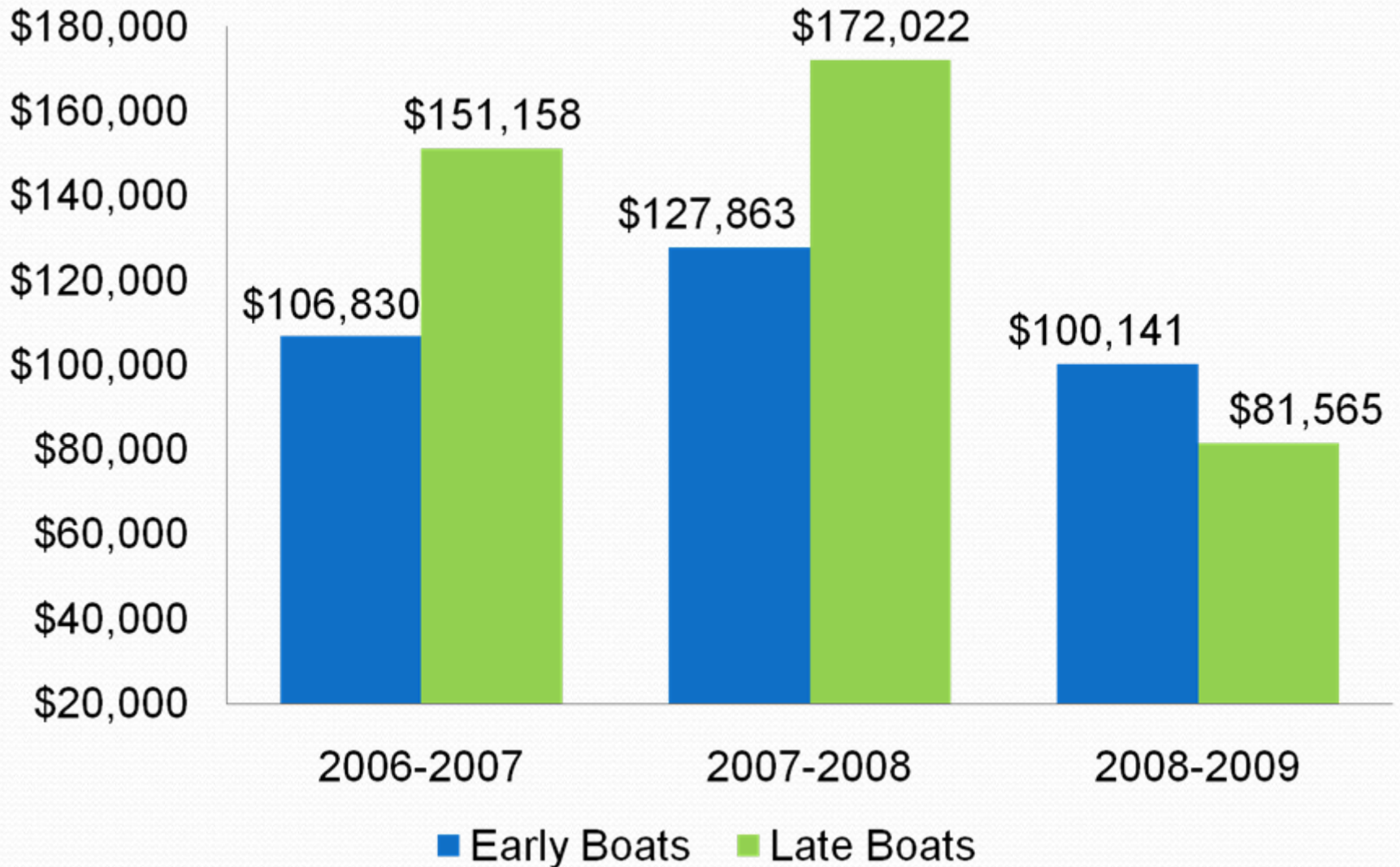




# State Season Opening: Average Pounds Landed by Early /Late Boats

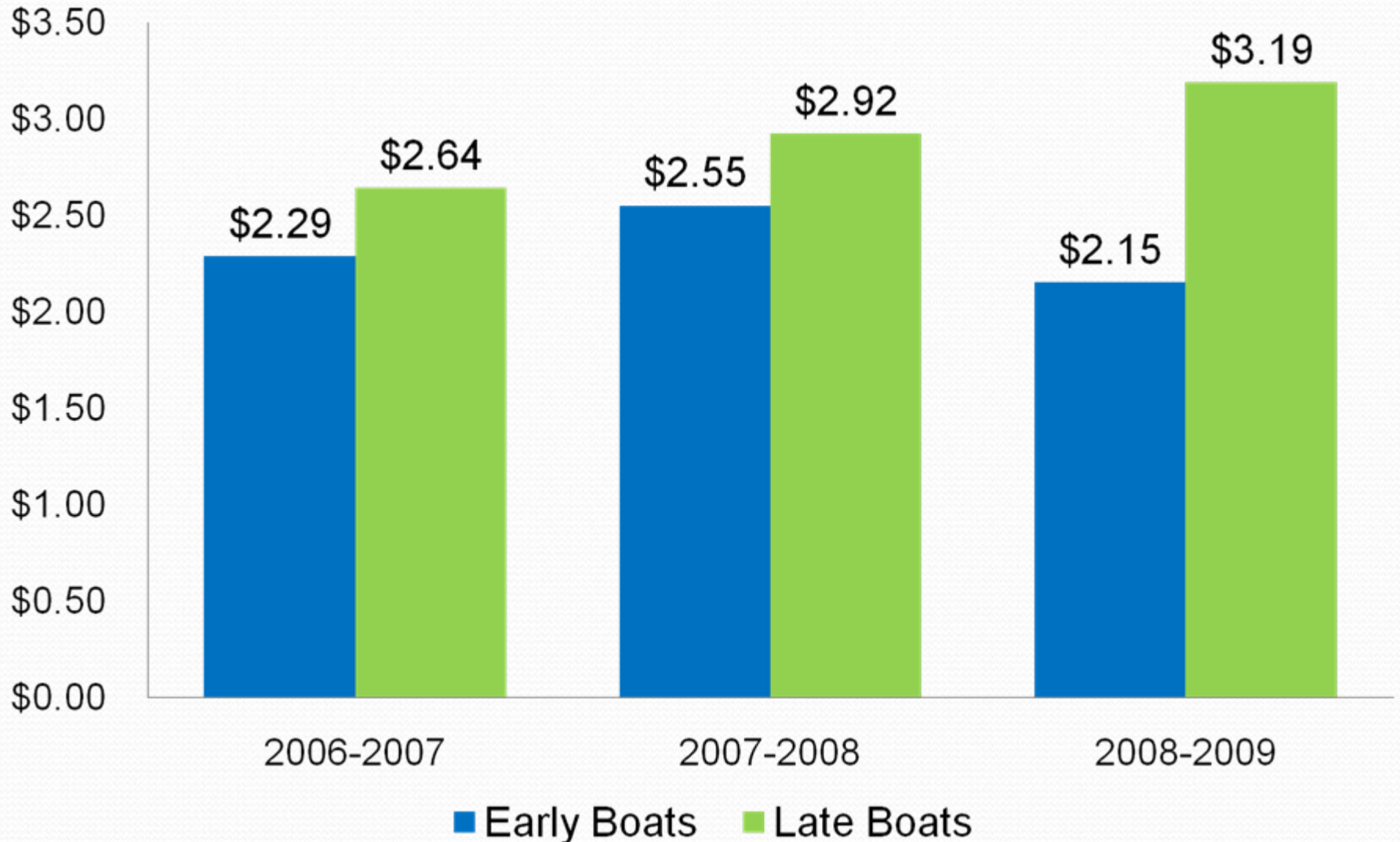


# State Season Opening: Average Value Per Boat Per Season Late/Early

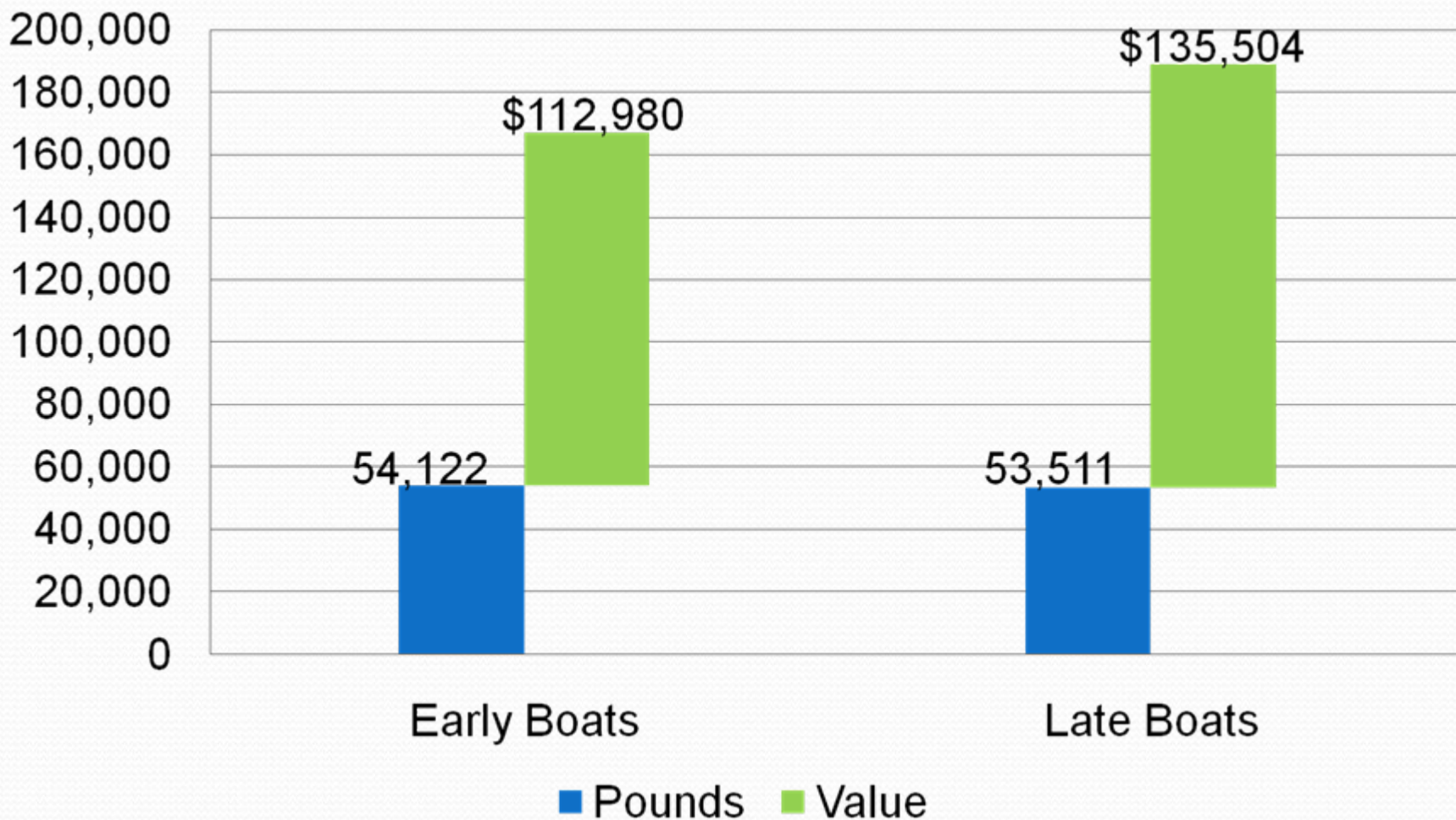


## State Season Opening:

### Average Season Opening Price Per Pound Early /Late Boats



# State Season Opening 3-Year Average Pounds and Value Early/Late Boats



# Next Step- Buyback

- Continued industry interest in license buyback program
- A buyback program would not be effective under an open access fishery (e.g. OR licensed vessels can participate in WA outside 3-miles without WA license)
- Development of LE 200
  - limits participation in the crab fishery in federal waters adjacent to each state to vessels licensed by that state. Adopted by reciprocal regulations in WA, OR and CA

# License Buyback

- WA state legislature required WDFW to prepare two reports
  - 2006 report outlined the need for reduced effort in the WA fishery
  - 2008 report described industry preferred buyback program
- Industry preferred buyback program:
  - Purchase 80 licenses, estimated cost: \$50 million
  - Purchase license only
  - Low bid
  - 100% federally funded

# Buyback-Impacts to Oregon and California

- Buyback program development considered including the purchase of Oregon and California permits owned by anyone participating in the Washington license buyback.
- Purchasing OR and CA permits would have reduced the number of WA licenses that could be purchased
- Final buyback does not include purchasing OR and CA licenses in order to maximize the purchase of WA licenses, intent is to create a WA fishery that can support state and tribal fishers with fewer management restrictions resulting in less transfer of effort to OR and CA which is already occurring

# Historical Catch

Washington Coastal Dungeness crab Landings 1950-2008  
59 Year Average : 9.8 Million Pounds

