



California Whale Entanglement Discussion Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group Summary of Key Themes, September 4-5, 2019

The California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) held an in-person meeting on September 4-5, 2019 to provide input the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) regarding the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP) rulemaking and Incidental Take Permitting (ITP) process, and to discuss the 2019-20 RAMP in consideration of the recent settlement agreement.

Meeting objectives included:

- Build a shared understanding of the relationships across the RAMP, ITP process, and settlement requirements and how these parallel and directly related processes will affect the 2019-20 fishing season and inform CDFW's development of the RAMP rulemaking (Title 14) and draft Conservation Plan (CP).
- Continue to develop the RAMP for humpback whales, blue whales, and leatherback turtles, including fine-tuning risk factors and identifying management measures in anticipation of the 2019-20 fishing season, and to inform the draft RAMP rulemaking and draft CP.
- Consider a process for evaluating risk factors in advance of and during the 2019-20 fishing season, including the process for developing recommendations to reduce entanglement risk for consideration by the CDFW Director, and develop 2019-20 Risk Assessment Framework (RAF) schedule.
- Identify Working Group recommendation(s), including a process and timeline for sharing meeting outcomes with target audiences together with other activities to be conducted in advance of the 2019-20 fishing season.

The following summary captures key themes discussed by the Working Group and its advisors during the September 4-5, 2019 meeting; it is not to be considered a transcript¹. Next steps that were identified during the meeting are **highlighted in blue**. Content **highlighted in green** indicates places where Working Group participants made requests or arrived at agreements that should be tracked as part of the RAMP's ongoing development. Key themes summaries and other meeting outputs are designed to provide Working Group participants with information to share and discuss with their peers, as well as inform ongoing discussions within the Working Group itself. Summaries and materials also act as a source of information for those interested in this topic.

The summary, in addition to other meeting materials and products, have been made available to CDFW, the Ocean Protection Council, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Legislature, and the California Dungeness Crab Task Force. This summary and related materials will also be shared with target audiences, including fishing leadership, the whale watch community, and other interested members of the public throughout California. Previous meeting summaries, memos, and other information about the Working Group is available at <http://www.opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group/> and <http://www.opc.ca.gov/risk-assessment-and-mitigation-program-ramp/>. Additional information is available at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries>.

¹ This summary is not intended to be a legally accurate document. All references to legally binding documents, regulations, and/or laws should be directly sourced.

Feedback from fishermen, decision makers, and others on the ideas and concepts discussed during the September 4-5, 2019 meeting is welcome and can be shared directly with the Working Group at info@cawhalegroup.com.

Connections: RAMP, Incidental Take Permit (ITP) Process, and Settlement Requirements

CDFW provided the Working Group with a presentation ([here](#)) that outlined the connections across the three 'phases' of RAMP development:

- **Interim Management** (2019-2020), which is dictated by the terms of a settlement agreement reached between CDFW, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA) in March 2019;
- **RAMP 1** (starting 2020-21 through to when RAMP 2 is available), which will be defined by Title 14 RAMP regulations; and
- **RAMP 2** (starting date TBC), which will replace RAMP regulations once the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) approves a CP and issues an ITP.

The Working Group used this introductory presentation as an opportunity to gain clarity on how an entanglement is defined as part of the settlement (Interim Management):

- CDFW reviewed the settlement definitions of entanglements for whale species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (i.e., humpback whales and blue whales), which prescribes that one (1) entanglement in confirmed California commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear and two (2) entanglements in unconfirmed fishing gear would prompt a closure or other management response.
- The Working Group confirmed what types of entanglements would or would not prompt a closure or other management response:
 - A confirmed entanglement in California commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear or a confirmed entanglement in unknown gear that could possibly be California commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear would be considered an entanglement.
 - **Recreational Gear:** The settlement only applies to entanglements in California commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear. However, since recreational gear is generally unmarked there is the potential for recreational gear prompting management measures if involved in an entanglement.
 - A confirmed entanglement in known or unknown gear that is confirmed as not California commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear would not be considered an entanglement.
 - **Out-of-State Gear:** Whales entangled in confirmed Oregon or Washington fishing gear would not be considered a California entanglement.
 - **Out of Season Entanglements:** If a whale is discovered entangled in California commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear from a previous season, it will not be considered an entanglement for the upcoming/current season.
 - The group also discussed the challenges with entanglements that are reported/confirmed in late in the season (June/June) and how/if this would prompt a management response.
- The Working Group discussed these entanglement definitions and how these would be applied during the 2019-20 season.
 - Working Group participants expressed serious concern about entanglements in unidentifiable fishing gear impacting the Dungeness crab fishery and prompting management measures, with a few participants questioning the legality. CDFW explained that new commercial trap gear marking requirements, which are currently underway, should help reduce the number of entanglements in unknown gear.

- The group emphasized the importance of capturing as much information as possible from any entanglement to maintain an operating fishery, as well as determine the need for a management response. The Working Group can continue to work with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to conduct forensic review.
- The group confirmed that NMFS is responsible for determining and confirming entanglements, and CDFW and the Working Group will rely on entanglement information from NMFS as it becomes available to help inform this factor.
- CDFW outlined additional details specific to the settlement terms, including the prescribed approach to managing the spring fishery.
 - For the 2019-20 season, the Central Management Area (south of the Sonoma/Mendocino county line) will close (or another management action can be recommended by the Working Group) on April 1 unless entanglement risk is determined to be low. The season will remain open in the Northern Management Area (north of the Sonoma/Mendocino county line) unless risk is determined to be high.
 - If the March 15, 2020 risk assessment determines the Central Management Area is at low risk, then the April 1, 2020 closure can be lifted by the Director after consultation with the Working Group and the settlement parties. This decision-making process applies from April 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020 on each successive reporting date.
 - CDFW noted that the Working Group will need to meet prior to each reporting date to make a recommendation, and they can hold additional meetings as deemed necessary if new information becomes available.
 - The Working Group requested clarification on how CDFW will be considering the start of the 2019-20 fishing season (openers in the Central and Northern Management Areas) and heading towards April 1, 2020.
 - At the beginning of the season, CDFW will look to issue a direction for the entire coast, but that direction could have caveats for parts of the coast. The settlement allows flexibility in this area.
 - For April 1, 2020, CDFW will need to have a recommendation ready earlier (March 15, 2020) to take into consideration the logistics of removing gear. Management measures must be practical and implementable.

Throughout the meeting, the Working Group continued to discuss the draft RAMP rulemaking (RAMP 1) and planning for the 2019-20 fishing season (Interim Management), which are summarized in the sections below.

RAMP 1 (starting 2020-21): CDFW Straw Proposals, Draft Integrated RAMP

As stipulated in [Fish and Game Code Section 8276.1](#), CDFW is required, in consultation with the Working Group, to adopt regulations on or before November 1, 2020 to establish criteria and protocols to evaluate and respond to elevated entanglement risk (i.e., the RAMP). These regulations are expected to be in place for the 2020-21 fishing season and until NOAA issues an ITP to the state for the Dungeness crab fishery (timing TBC).

During the Working Group's March 2019 meeting, CDFW presented an initial outline of what a RAMP rulemaking might include (see meeting summary [here](#)) and the Working Group provided initial feedback. Since that time, CDFW has continued to develop the RAMP rulemaking and during the September 4-5, 2019 meeting, CDFW presented straw proposals for humpback whales, blue whales, and leatherback turtles for the Working Group's review and consideration ([here](#)). The draft straw proposals were developed based on Working Group's discussions to date, along with additional guidance from Working Group advisors from April-August 2019.

- CDFW explained that RAMP regulations must meet [California's Administrative Procedures Act \(APA\)](#) requirements. With this in mind, only aspects of the current RAMP that are “shovel ready” were included in the draft straw proposals. As a result, the straw proposals include three of the four RAMP risk factors: entanglements, marine life concentrations, and fishing dynamics. The forage/ocean factor was not integrated into the draft straw proposals but can be added in the future as the factor is further developed. Also, the current ‘stoplight’ system (red/yellow/green) for identifying high/medium/low risk needs to be updated to more objective and quantitative.
- CDFW approached the draft rulemaking through a decision tree lens, outlining what would be prompted under specific risk factors. The Working Group was invited to provide feedback to the approach overall, and specifically to information included in red boxes which indicated the content was draft and subject to feedback and possible revision.
 - Participants expressed concern that the Working Group had not been given an opportunity to review the draft proposals in advance of the meeting. The group expressed a willingness to respond in real-time, however requested additional time to conduct a more thoughtful review of the drafts before providing CDFW well-informed feedback.
- CDFW noted that in the past the Working Group had lead the RAMP development process. Due to the strict timelines and mandates outlined in legislation, CDFW has developed draft straw proposals for the Working Group’s review and feedback which CDFW highly values.

The Working Group walked through the draft straw proposals with CDFW, discussed core components to the approach, and provided initial reflections.

- **Thresholds:** Working Group participants expressed concerns about the low number of whale and leatherback entanglements and marine species concentrations included in the draft straw proposal that would trigger management measures. Generally, the group felt the draft straw proposals reflected the settlement agreement, which for some on the Working Group is considered highly restrictive. The group discussed how current thresholds could severely reduce fishing opportunity which, in turn, will severely impact fishermen’s livelihoods. The group also discussed the importance of taking a precautionary approach that will work to prevent entanglements. Some Working Group participants requested that CDFW consider higher thresholds, however additional time was requested to determine what numbers should be considered.
 - CDFW explained the rationale for the draft thresholds included in the straw proposal were informed by a number of resources, including the Endangered Species Act, stock assessments and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).
- **Proposed Scale of Management Measures:** Working Group participants expressed concerns about the broad geographic scale of management measure implementation (e.g., statewide closures, reducing lines by 50 percent) outlined in the draft straw proposals.
 - There was general agreement that data is available to identify humpback whale and leatherback hotspots and smaller scale areas (e.g., districts, landmarks, lat/long) where closures or a reduction in lines could be applied. *Working Group participants requested that CDFW consider more refined spatial and temporal closures.*
- **Forage/Ocean Conditions Factor:** The Working Group emphasized the important role of this risk factor since the initial development of the RAMP, and expressed concern and frustration that this factor was not included in the draft straw proposals. *The Working Group encouraged further research on potential models that might be ready to inform this risk factor.*
 - Though this factor is not currently included, CDFW stated it can still be used in risk assessments and cited as a resource for making a management recommendation. For it to be incorporated in RAMP rulemaking it has to have clear metrics and triggers to determine elevated risk. As

collaboration with experts and ocean modeling work continues, CDFW hopes to include this factor in an updated RAMP rulemaking.

- **Fleet Dynamics Risk Factor:** The Working Group discussed the need for considering the fishing dynamics factor consistently across all marine species and requested clarification on what data CDFW needs to inform this factor. The use of eTix was highlighted as an available data source that would provide real-time information on fishing activity (e.g., pounds landed, fishing location, vessel details, etc.).
 - CDFW outlined the need to better understand the number and concentration of lines in the water in relation to whales, which isn't readily available information. The group discussed how best to identify gear location, including using landings data (e.g., eTix) and requiring solar loggers. The Working Group also noted the need for further discussion on solar loggers and whether their current use within the fleet as part of a pilot effort is meeting previously identified goals.
- **Gear Innovations:** The Working Group discussed the role of gear innovations, including the possibility of using gear innovations to allow for continued fishing when whales are present.
 - Since there is not currently a viable gear innovation available to act in this way, the draft straw proposals do not include a gear innovation option. CDFW encouraged the Working Group to continue exploring gear innovations as worthwhile management options to reduce entanglements.
 - Working Group members discussed using pingers to keep whales out of fishing areas, fishing more than one trap per line to reduce the number of lines in the water, and the possibility of using Novabraid/yale grip sleeves, a gear innovation already tested by some commercial Dungeness crab fishermen. NMFS expressed hesitation about using pingers due to a number of questions that need to be answered, including whether additional noise in the water could be harmful to whales. Based on testing done on gear innovations to date, the Novabraid was identified by some fishermen on the Working Group to be most effective.
 - **The Working Group's Communications Project Team will consider how to share information about the Novabraid more broadly with Dungeness crab fishermen and identify additional volunteer fishermen to test out this gear modification.**
- **Hindcasting:** Working Group participants requested that historical data be used to test the outcomes of the draft straw proposals to gain a better understanding of what the outputs would have been during previous fishing seasons.
 - NMFS provided a brief overview of past entanglement information broken down by month to gain a better picture of when the draft straw proposals would have reached identified thresholds and have prompted a management response. Based on an initial review, four of the five fishing seasons reviewed would started with some level of management in place, as described in the draft straw proposal. The group requested similar information on forage/ocean conditions, marine life concentrations, and fishing dynamics.
 - **The Working Group requested hindcasting be conducted through the lens of the draft straw proposals using Monterey Bay Whale Watch (MBWW) and Gulf of the Farallones whale watch data to determine if how the draft straw proposals would have responded in previous fishing seasons.**
 - The Working Group agreed to each factor lead exploring the hindcasting exercise to the best of their abilities, while being mindful of limited available data to help inform this request.

Humpback Whales

The Working Group shared their initial reflections on the humpback whale draft straw proposal.

- **Using Data from MBWW:** Working Group participants continued to express concerns about applying MBWW data to inform humpback (and blue whale) concentrations beyond the Monterey Bay area. Some Working Group participants expressed concerns about the potential bias and objectivity of the data. Others highlighted the importance of using the data because there is extremely limited information available on whale distribution/concentrations to inform Working Group recommendations.
 - MBWW data is meant to be used as a signal to when migrating humpback whales are leaving/returning to California waters. The group discussed the possibility of using the MBWW data as an indicator of a trend, which was generally supported.
 - The group discussed using daily whale count data from the Farallon Islands collected by Point Blue Conservation Science trained biologists. This could be used to inform the timing and abundance of whales in the Gulf of the Farallones.
 - **CDFW to work with Working Group advisors to better understand the data available from the Gulf of the Farallones and its applicability to informing the whale concentrations factor.**
- **ESA Species:** Some Working Group participants questioned whether all humpback whales off California were ESA-listed species. NMFS confirmed there are two populations of humpback whales found off California and both are ESA-listed species, with one population being classified as endangered and the other threatened.
 - To better inform the RAMP, NMFS suggested using humpback whale population numbers outlined in the stock assessments prepared for MMPA because those numbers look at a five-year average and are the most up-to-date numbers available.

Blue Whales

The Working Group shared their initial reflections on the blue whale draft straw proposal.

- **Past Entanglements:** NMFS reported there has been three confirmed blue whale entanglements in California commercial Dungeness crab fishing gear on record. All three entanglements were reported in the months of June and July (in different years).
- **Blue Whale Behavior:** Due to blue whale behavior, they are less likely to interact with the Dungeness crab fishery because they feed mostly in deeper water areas that do not overlap with fishing efforts. On occasion, however, they do feed a shallow water krill species, which could be a concern.
- **Using Data from MBWW:** The Working Group requested CDFW find an alternative data source to use instead of MBWW data since blue whales are not usually found in Monterey Bay. The group also requested carrying over suggestions from the humpback whale discussion that apply.

Leatherback Turtles

The Working Group shared their initial reflections on the leatherback turtle draft straw proposal.

- **Thresholds and Management Measures:** The Working Group requested clarification on the reasoning for such low leatherback turtle concentrations used in the straw proposal. The Working Group expressed concern about having a statewide closure when leatherback turtles tend to congregate in such a limited area from Pt. Arena to Pt. Arguello and have usually left on their migration by November 1.
 - Scott Benson, a NOAA scientist and Working Group advisor, explained the numbers are based on leatherback turtles being critically endangered. A narrower geographic focus is possible. Scott also noted that he is working with CDFW on applying for Federal Section 6 grant to increase the number of satellite tags on leatherback turtles to provide more detailed data.
 - **Scott and CDFW to work together to refine the habitat area to prevent a statewide closure.**

- Working Group participants also noted the need to make sure the management measures based on depth restrictions (e.g., 30 fathoms) do not create compaction of fishing effort in certain areas and, then, an increased potential risk for whales.
 - **Scott to share a paper with the Working Group on the relationship between leatherback turtles and depth.**
- **Entanglements and Servicing Gear:** Working Group participants asked about the number of leatherback turtles interactions authorized for longline fishing gear and if that same number could apply to Dungeness crab fishing gear.
 - The threshold used for longlining is related to how often longline gear is tended. Dungeness crab gear would have to be tended daily to achieve comparable release numbers (currently commercial gear is required to be serviced every 96 hours). CDFW highlighted an increase in the amount of time gear is serviced could be another management option for consideration.

The September 4-5, 2019 meeting was the Working Group's first opportunity to review the draft straw proposals and the group requested the opportunity to provide ongoing feedback following the meeting.

- CDFW emphasized that the drafts were not final and the Working Group will have multiple opportunities to provide feedback on the draft RAMP regulations at future Working Group meetings and during the formal rulemaking process. While subject to change, the following RAMP rulemaking timeline was shared with the Working Group to achieve the implementation deadline of November 1, 2020:
 - 2019
 - May-August: preliminary Working Group scoping
 - September-December: internal CDFW process, provide progress updates to Working Group
 - 2020
 - January-February: CDFW finalizes proposed RAMP regulations, initiate 45-day public notice period
 - Late March: public hearing
 - April-May: incorporate revisions, may initiate additional 45-day public notice period, or shorter 15 day
 - June: finalize documents
 - July: CDFW submits RAMP regulations to Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for 30-day review
 - August: OAL submits RAMP regulations to Secretary of State
 - October: quarterly effective date
- **In the nearterm, Working Group participants will provide additional feedback on the draft straw proposals to Ryan Bartling at by COB, Thursday, September 19.**

Interim Management (2019-20 RAMP)

CDFW presented information ([here](#)) on the interim management requirements, as detailed in the settlement, that will occur during the 2019-2020 season before the RAMP regulations are in place in time for the 2020-21 fishing season.

- CDFW reviewed the entanglement and ESA-listed whale concentrations thresholds that prompt a district-wide closure or other management action by the CDFW Director (Director). Management measures are to be based on best available science and determined by the Director after consultation with the Working Group and settlement parties.
 - The Working Group requested clarification on the meaning of the "presence of 20 or more ESA-listed whales" as defined in the settlement and whether that could mean a combination of

species or a single species. The group acknowledged that a high degree of ambiguity and lack of clarity in how the whale concentration thresholds are outlined in the settlement makes it difficult to understand how to implement.

- CDFW clarified that the “presence of 20 or more ESA-listed species” could be a combination of ESA-listed whales, but that non ESA-listed species would not count towards the total. For example, if 20 whales were spotted, including 10 humpback whales and 10 gray whales, only the 10 humpback whales would count towards determining what action to take.
- The group discussed the importance of the RAMP and the amount of time that was invested in developing it, and highlighted concerns about having the lawsuit drive the process.
 - CDFW responded that the RAMP is bigger than the settlement and the legislature is giving the Working Group a job to do moving forward. The settlement is something that needs to be accommodated, and the Working Group has been identified as the primary advisory body to help inform the state on this complex issue.
 - The Working Group agreed to consider the 2019-20 RAMP, and specifically the risk assessment process, as the RAMP has been implemented in previous seasons. The Working Group will look to CDFW to inform the group how settlement requirements need to be considered at key timeframes.

CDFW highlighted the opportunity for the Working Group to provide recommendations and input to the Director on what management measures to take or not to take on the dates identified in the settlement.

- **Working Group Role:** The Working Group requested clarification on the group’s role in providing input to the Director, the Director’s role, and how that ties into the settlement parties.
 - The Working Group has an opportunity to provide guidance and inform the Director’s decision by providing recommendations based on available data in advance of each reporting date. The CDFW Director has sole authority to make decisions and implement management measures. Settlement parties can weigh in on the process, and if they do not believe the process is reflective of the settlement agreement they could potentially end the stay.
- **Risk Assessment and Recommendation Development Process:** CDFW clarified that they will work with risk factor leads to gather available data in advance of each risk assessment and then present that information to the Working Group for review and input during risk assessment conference calls.
 - CDFW acknowledged that sometimes data may not be available, but that the Working Group would have to make a recommendation(s) based on the best available data to meet the settlement requirements.
 - The Working Group emphasized needing to receive information in advance of risk assessment conference calls to successfully consider and provide recommendations to the CDFW Director within the required timeframes of the settlement. The group discussed how to be sufficiently informed in advance of and during calls, while also ensuring that the information received in a neutral format that allows the Working Group to form their own assessment.
 - The group discussed receiving pre-meeting content, and whether a proposed risk level for each factor should be provided in advance of risk assessment calls. Some participants shared that having all of the information in advance would help better inform Working Group discussions and the recommendation making process. Others expressed concern that receiving proposed risk levels could bias participant’s views in advance of Working Group discussions. The group discussed the pros and cons to both approaches, and requested that any newly available data should be shared during the call to ensure the risk assessment is based on the most up-to-date information.

- **Risk Assessment Conference Calls:** The Working Group discussed the meeting process for when CDFW convenes the Working Group during the upcoming season to review and assess risk levels.
 - Being mindful of a tighter schedule and the need to evaluate risk every two weeks, the full Working Group will be invited to participate in risk assessment conference calls.
 - The Working Group agreed that efforts by CDFW should be made to have, at minimum, two commercial fishermen, two representatives from conservation organizations, and one recreational fishermen present during the call. Depending on the circumstances, there may be a need to have fishermen from a particular port/area/region included on the call. If minimum participation cannot be reached, CDFW will make a good faith effort to connect with those groups absent from the call and get their input prior to/following the risk assessment call.
- **Management Measure Recommendation Form:** To inform risk assessment calls, CDFW developed a draft form to summarize essential information to share with the CDFW Director. The form includes the following: identifies available data, identifies risk and severity, outlines recommendations, timing for recommendations, suggestions for relaxing or unwinding management measures, and other management measure alternatives. The Working Group discussed the form and thought it was a good starting place and requested a space for recommendation-making rationale to be added to the form. In addition, Working Group participants discussed the idea of ranking the data streams included in the rationale to provide the Director with an understanding of the quality of the data available when making management recommendations.
- **CDFW will continue to work with the Working Group to clarify the process steps that are needed to engage the Working Group during the 2019-20 RAMP, including key dates and times throughout the season.**
- **Need for Readily Available Data:** The Working Group discussed the ongoing need for better and more comprehensive data to inform the 2019-20 RAMP, and beyond. Improved datastreams would allow for a more refined management response to elevated risk. The group also highlighted that there are other data available that could be more effectively integrated into the RAMP in the nearterm.
 - **Aerial Surveys:** The Working Group discussed the need for aerial surveys to acquire data for the upcoming season risk assessments and asked whether funding was available/needed.
 - The group outlined their preference for a preseason survey in mid to late October and in March and requested that NOAA and LightHawk collaborate to support this effort, if possible. There was concern expressed by some Working Group participants and advisors about relying on aerial surveys for data due to weather limitations.
 - **Models:** The group discussed the value of considering models such as EcoCast, the blue whale model developed by Briana Abrahms and Elliott Hazen, and the whale/forage model that Karin Forney is developing into the draft straw proposals. However, some participants urged caution in adopting the models too soon when they have not been thoroughly tested. While a model could provide valuable predictive capabilities to the RAMP, the model would need to be fully vetted for accuracy and utility prior to integration.

2019-20 Working Group Schedule and Next Steps

The Working Group worked with CDFW to begin mapping out a timeline and related schedule to track meetings, key milestones, and deadlines through June 30, 2020.

- **Strategic Earth and CDFW will continue to develop a draft calendar/schedule and updated Work Plan for the Working Group's review and confirmation.**

The group discussed a number of additional items that need to be followed-up on and/or tracked over the coming weeks, including:

- The group discussed convening the Communications Project Team to develop a suite of external communications, including a 2019-20 Best Practices Guide, summary/memo providing a status update on the Working Group's progress, possible press release or media outreach, etc.
 - CDFW highlighted their work in developing a newsletter specific to sharing information about the California Dungeness crab fishery, which could be another channel for sharing information about the Working Group's efforts.
 - **Strategic Earth will convene a Communications Project Team call by mid-September to advance these identified communications needs.**
- CDFW provided a brief update on their progress in submitting two [Species Recovery Grants](#) to NOAA by the October 30 deadline. The proposals will focus on improving datastreams for humpback and blue whale and leatherback turtles, as informed by the Working Group's 2018-19 recommendations ([here](#)).
 - The Nature Conservancy (TNC) also provided a brief update on the status of available funding for Working Group operations that has been made available by TNC and the OPC since 2016. Now that the Working Group has been formally defined by the state in legislation, it is appropriate to transition the Working Group's primary funding responsibilities from TNC to the state. TNC looks forward to supporting a seamless funding transition to prevent any lapses in funding that will hinder the Working Group's forward progress.

The Working Group confirmed a number of draft recommendations that require additional discussion ([here](#)).

- Looking ahead to the coming weeks and months, the Working Group will hold their monthly conference calls on September 26 and October 31 to continue discussing feedback on the straw proposals and planning for the upcoming season. These calls will be open to the public.
- Additionally, planning is underway to try to pair a Working Group meeting in mid-October with the upcoming California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF) meeting. Additional details will be shared as soon as they are available.

Please send direct communications to the Working Group, including ideas, questions or concerns, to info@cawhalegroup.com.