

September 23, 2016

Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Council Members,

This letter is to express the support of the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group), for the proposed Ocean Protection Council funding to the Nature Conservancy. The proposed funding would assist the Working Group in implementing its projects, including projects that address critical information gaps. Working Group members have contributed substantial in-kind contributions to develop project proposals and are committed to leveraging additional funds to complement the proposed OPC funding and successfully implement the projects. Projects may include efforts to improve spatial and temporal information on the distribution and movement of whale populations as well as commercial and recreational fishing gear. This funding may also support critical ongoing efforts to communicate the nature of the whale entanglement issue, recommendations for gear changes, and disentanglement training for the fleet.

Whale entanglements have increased substantially over the past couple of years. The Working Group is charged with providing guidance and recommendations to resource managers and the California Dungeness crab fishing industry about how to avoid and minimize entanglements. The Working Group also identifies measurements or experiments that can be developed or implemented to address whale entanglements. The proposed funding would greatly enhance the Working Group's ability to achieve its goals.

Sincerely,

The Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group

Members (omits state and federal agency participants):

Jim Anderson
Commercial Fishing, Half Moon Bay

Tom Dempsey
The Nature Conservancy

Calder Deyerle
Commercial Fishing, Monterey Bay Area

Tom Estes
Commercial Fishing, Fort Bragg

Gerry Hemmingsen
Commercial Fishing, Crescent City

Doug Laughlin
Coastside Fishing Club

Kathi Koontz
Whale Disentanglement Network

Bob Maharry
Commercial Fishing, Morro Bay

Tom Mattusch
Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel

John Mellor
Commercial Fishing, San Francisco

Kristen Monsell
Center for Biological Diversity

Brian Nolte
Commercial Fishing, Oregon

Dick Ogg
Commercial Fishing, Bodega Bay

Kevin Pinto
Commercial Fishing, Eureka

Phil Pritting
Fishing Gear Manufacturer/Distributor

Geoff Shester
Oceana

Andrea Treece
Earthjustice

September 29, 2016

The Honorable John Laird, Secretary for Natural Resources, Chair
California Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Agenda Item 4: Support for Funding to Address Whale Entanglements

Dear Chair Laird and Council Members,

This letter is to express Oceana's support for the proposed Ocean Protection Council funding to assist the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group's efforts to reduce whale entanglements. California's ocean waters provide important feeding grounds and migration routes for several species of large whales which provide amazing whalewatching opportunities and serve key ecological roles as top predators. These whales are iconic symbols of California's ocean and are an invaluable resource to the State of California. We thank the Ocean Protection Council for your responsiveness to the recent increase in confirmed whale entanglements in fishing gear in recent years, by convening public meetings and supporting the formation of the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group. As a member of the Working Group, Oceana proudly supports the consensus recommendations of Working Group, including development of a Best Practices Guide, whale entanglement response training, exploration of gear modifications, and improving understanding of the co-occurrence between whales and fishing gear.

We believe the Working Group has developed a comprehensive package of projects that will effectively fill information gaps and enable long-term solutions to this emerging issue. These projects include efforts to improve spatial and temporal information on the distribution and movement of whale populations as well as commercial and recreational fishing gear, ongoing efforts to communicate the nature of the whale entanglement issue, exploration of gear changes, and disentanglement training for the fleet. This funding package will help enable the Working Group to implement its projects in the 2016-17 Dungeness crab fishing season and beyond, while helping leverage additional funds for these projects.

Oceana has contributed resources to help the Working group develop project proposals. As part of our participation in the Working Group, last June 2016, Oceana partnered with scientists from the NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center to develop and test methods for aerial surveys of the distribution of crab traps. Among other important projects, this funding may support efforts to expand and further test build upon these aerial survey methods on a broader temporal and spatial scale this upcoming season.

The Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group has become a great example how a diverse group of stakeholders and agencies can come together to tackle an important and challenging issue in a systematic, deliberate way. The Working Group's projects may also eventually inform efforts to reduce entanglements in other fisheries. We commend Strategic Earth Consulting for their impressive job as facilitators that have enabled the Working Group's success to date. Thank you for your support of the Working Group, and we ask that you approve the staff-recommended funding to help the Working Group achieve its goals, providing immense benefit to California's treasured whales and sustainable fisheries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Shester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Geoff" being more prominent than the last name "Shester".

Geoffrey Shester, Ph.D.
California Campaign Director



October 4, 2016

Dear Council Members,

Half Moon Bay Seafood Marketing Association (HMBSMA) is an Association of commercial fishermen working out of Pillar Point Harbor, which represents producers of all gear types, all local target species, and all sizes of fishing businesses. All of our current members participate in the Dungeness Crab Fishery.

We are writing to express our support for the proposed Ocean Protection Council funding to the Nature Conservancy. The proposed funding would assist the Working Group in implementing its projects, including projects that address critical information gaps.

It is important to the industry that projects continue that may improve spatial and temporal information on the distribution and movement of whale populations as well as commercial and recreational fishing gear. We are in favor of this funding to support these critical ongoing efforts to communicate the nature of the whale entanglement issue, recommendations for gear changes, and disentanglement training for the fleet.

Whale entanglements have increased substantially over the past couple of years. HMBSMA members and staff have worked closely with The Nature Conservancy on Whale Entanglement training. In Half Moon Bay, we have successfully implemented a Lost Gear Recovery program for the past two years, and are testing a new data tool developed by TNC to track lost gear. We are also working with the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group to support best practices guides and facilitate communication with the fleet. The proposed funding would greatly enhance the ability of HMBSMA and others to continue collaborating to raise awareness and reduce the interactions of whales and fishing gear.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Damrosch".

Lisa Damrosch
Executive Director- Half Moon Bay Seafood Marketing Association



ALASKA CALIFORNIA FLORIDA MID-PACIFIC NORTHEAST NORTHERN ROCKIES
NORTHWEST ROCKY MOUNTAIN WASHINGTON, D.C. INTERNATIONAL

October 7, 2016

The Honorable John Laird, Secretary for Natural Resources, Chair
California Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814
c/o Holly Wyer, Program Manager
Holly.Wyer@resources.ca.gov

RE: Agenda Item 4: Support for Funding to Address Whale Entanglements

Dear Chair Laird and Council Members,

As a member of the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group, Earthjustice supports the proposed Ocean Protection Council funding to assist the Working Group's efforts to reduce whale entanglements. Whale entanglements have increased substantially in recent years. These entanglements are a major concern for coastal communities and fishermen, as well as for Californians everywhere who value our rich marine natural heritage. The Working Group is charged with the important task of providing recommendations to resource managers and the California Dungeness crab fishing industry about how to avoid and minimize these entanglements going forward.

In the interest of fulfilling that goal, the Working Group has developed a number of projects to be implemented in the coming year. These projects include efforts to improve spatial and temporal information on the distribution and movement of whale populations as well as commercial and recreational fishing gear, ongoing efforts to communicate the nature of the whale entanglement issue, exploration of gear changes, and disentanglement training for the fleet. Understanding the relationship between fishing effort and whale movements is likely to be especially valuable in developing effective long-term measures to avoid entanglements. The proposed funding package will help enable the Working Group to implement its projects in the 2016-17 Dungeness crab fishing season and beyond.

Thank you for your support of the Working Group. We ask that you approve the staff-recommended funding to help the Working Group achieve its goals of protecting whales and promoting sustainable fishing.

Sincerely,

Andrea A. Treece
Staff Attorney, Oceans Program