Proposal by DCTF Processor Representatives to the California Dungeness Crab Task Force: Staged Deployment Plan

Introduction

The California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF) has identified 12 objectives which could contribute to improvement of the Dungeness crab fishery. The following plan brings meaningful contribution to each of the first six objectives which are considered highest priority objectives. This plan is a simple outline of a number of innovative mechanisms that would address the California fishery's unique challenges.

- The plan endeavors to reduce overall capacity and establish an effort threshold.
- It will also increase efficiency by reducing cost of operations to all participants. This will result in more profitable operations for all participants.
- The plan honors working fishermen and is crafted to reward EVERYONE who wants to work.
- The plan design allows opportunity for lightly capitalized future entrants to enter the fishery, grow their business and contribute to a productive multigenerational fishery.

Pot Limits

A tiered pot limit program is at the heart of the plan.

Recommendation:

- Give 60 top tier limit holders 500 pots based on landings in bill 1690 control period (30,000 pots).
    - (10% of permits with 20% of pot capacity)
- Allocate 300 pots each to the rest of active permit holders based on bill 1690 (about 100,000 pots).
    - (57% of permits with 67% of pot capacity)
- All latent permits allocated 100 pots each (about 20,000 pots).
    - (33% of permits with 13% of pot capacity)

Determine through analysis of data total pots to be allocated according to outline above and establish this number as total allowable pots for buoy tag program. (Additional buoy tags are allocated only for lost pot replacement during season). This number is the FISHERY POT THRESHHOLD (FPT) to which the fishery is managed.

It is assumed that not all pots in FPT will be deployed; if similar to Oregon – 20,000 will not be deployed. Within the un-deployed buoy tags there will be opportunity to reward latent permit holders who work their permits and progress in productivity by an annual increase of pot allocation.

Ownership, transferability and stacking

No individual, business entity or group of individuals associated with a singular business entity may own more than two permits. In the case where an individual currently owns more than 2 permits he will be given 3 years to divest any excess permits. This lag time will allow for a stabilization of the value of the permits.

There would be no permit stacking; only one permit may be associated with a vessel at any given time.

Latent Permit Management

Latent permits remain transferable but at the low tier pot allocation. To grow their business and increase pot allocation, a latent permit owner must generate productivity of 50 pounds of annual landings per pot (e.g. 100 pot permit operator would have to realize minimum landings of 5,000 pounds for season). This evidence of effort in the fishery would entitle this operator to buy an additional 40 buoy tags the successive season. If the permit holder generates another 50 pounds per pot for the 140 pots in the next season, then another 40 pots will be added and this will continue to occur until the permit holder attains a maximum of 300 pots. This can occur in as little as five years.

The change from "latent" to "active low-tier" permit with increased pot allocation does not make the permit transferable with 300 pot allocation. A new owner of "low-tier permit" returns to the 100 pot allocation and must increase his business through the effort described above.

Additional buoy rewarding to these growing fishery participants will be available to the extent that buoy tags are available up to the FPT. Top tier and second tier buoy tags will be issued first. Buoy tags to low-tier permits will not be distributed in excess of FPT. In the event that many latent permits become growing enterprises and qualify for additional pot allotment and the number of additional buoy tags requested exceeds the FPT, then only the available unused buoy tags will be distributed to qualified permit holders on a pro rata basis.

Staged Deployment

In order to promote more "even-flow" of product for the first weeks of the season there would be a two-color buoy tag system. 50 percent of the buoy tags will be blue and 50 percent red.
(An alternate percentage could be considered such as - 67%/33%)

Blue buoy tagged pots could be deployed by any permit holder in any crab opener. District 10 would continue to open November 15th and any permit holder may participate with blue buoy tags only.

Only blue buoy tags may be used in California until 12 noon on the eighth day of the northern season. This is the case whether the fishery starts December 1st or later due to any delay that may occur. At that time red buoy tag pots could be loaded aboard vessels and deployed in a second stage effort in ALL AREAS OF CALIFORNIA.

Any vessel in California with red tagged buoy pots in the water or aboard their vessel prior to noon of the eighth day of the northern season surrenders the use of its red-tagged pots for the season. This enforcement is made simpler by the in-port vulnerability of being caught loading gear or having gear aboard.

Limited Enforcement

Buoy tag enforcement will be only for the period from November 15th to January 31st. After that date additional pots without buoy tags may also be deployed in excess of the limit. Cost of enforcement would therefore only be for a 10 week period.

Presoak

Presoak would be shortened to 48 hours in all districts.

Conclusion

The positives in this plan are:

1. Maintains stability of fleet at reasonable threshold – objective #1
2. Reduction of effort in November season in District 10 – objective #2
3. Disincentive to WA or OR vessels to acquire latent permits – objective #3
4. Reduction of impact from OR vessels fishing both sides of state line – objective #3
5. More "even-flow" start of fisheries leading to better efficiencies in processing plants with less overtime/double-time. Seasonal plant employees would get longer duration of employment. Supply chain will have more crab in holiday season and beyond – objectives #4 and #6
6. Less gear in water makes for less pressure to take safety risks – objective #5
7. Less gear in water leaves more room for everyone to deploy pots.
8. Less gear in the water means less handling and impact on short, soft and female crabs
9. Reduction in waste of product in tanks due to unloading delays and limited buying leaving crabs in the bottom of tanks too long.
10. Creates a highly enforceable system – objective #11