

CA Dept of Fish & Wildlife Law Enforcement Division Response to January 2016 DCTF Legislative Report

“Recommendation 6 in the January 15, 2015 DCTF report identified unanimous support for an industry designed, funded, and implemented lost gear retrieval program that works in cooperation with the Department.” This statement inferred that the lost gear retrieval program would be implemented and operated by the Dungeness crab industry.

Recommendation 3 from the October 26-27, 2015 DCTF report supports a lost gear retrieval program which would ultimately be implemented and operated by the CA Department of Fish & Wildlife (Department). In this latest proposal from the DCTF the Department would be responsible for permits issued to the retrieval boats, accepting & storing the retrieved traps, notifying trap owners that their gear has been removed from the water, scrapping traps which are not claimed, collecting fees from trap owners, and monitoring who has accounts payable before issuing new Dungeness crab permits.

Here are some concerns of the Department Law Enforcement Division. In the proposal the retrieved gear will be delivered to our Department staff. We will then store this gear (location?), and charge the permittee to get the traps back. Who will be responsible for monitoring this program (Enforcement/Marine Region). Neither of us have the personnel needed for these programs. If we hire people to run this program, what do they do when the retrieval period is over? Their program also discusses notification be given to trap owners that their traps have been retrieved. Who is supposed to be making all these notifications? Then the Department is mandated to refuse renewal of the permits if the permittee does not pay for his retrieved traps. Will LRB be able to stay on top of these notifications with all their other tasks?

The Department Law Enforcement Division supports a program similar to Oregon & Washington. In those states, ownership of the abandoned traps reverts to the person retrieving them during the retrieval period. The people partaking in the Retrieval Program in those states are permitted by their respective states, and have record keeping requirements to account for the traps. The Departments involvement is minimal (banding abandoned traps when they are returned to port). Those states are not responsible for storing the traps. Both states have reported that their programs are having a positive effect on getting abandoned gear out of the water. With proven results with the programs in these other states, it would seem prudent to set up a similar program in California.