

**Dungeness Crab Proposed Changes to Sport Fishery  
and Department Recommendations for DCTF**

**April 22-23, 2014 DCTF Meeting  
Ukiah, California**

**The six proposed changes to the sport fishery were submitted by the Coastside Fishing Club of Napa, California to the Fish and Game Commission in October 2013. They are each followed by a response from the Department most of which were taken from a previous document submitted by the Department in 2006 to the Fish and Game Commission on their recommendations for acceptance or denial of similar proposals. That document can be viewed here:**  
<http://www.fgc.ca.gov/regulations/2006/dfganalysisocean.pdf>

**Proposal 1. Prohibit retention of females (presently legal in the sport fishery).**

Department Response: While there is a prohibition on the take of females in the commercial Dungeness fishery to allow for improved reproductive success, the Department does not believe this measure is necessary in the sport fishery for the following reasons: 1) The volume of crab taken in the sport fishery is small compared with that of the commercial fishery (est. <5%) and the volume of female crab is much smaller than that based on what we know about female crab growth, so any benefit to the stock would be minor, and 2) It would require considerable outreach and education on the part of the Department to inform the public on how to distinguish female from male crabs to achieve only a marginal benefit, and 3) It appears that at present sport and commercial fishery management measures have worked effectively to keep the resource at sustainable levels, as both sport and commercial fisheries have been productive in recent years.

**Proposal 2. Require use of "rotten cotton" on traps (not presently required).**

Department Response: Section 180.2, Title 14, CCR, requires that commercial traps used for finfish, mollusks or crustaceans be equipped with at one least trap destruct device. The Department does not support this recommendation for sport traps for the following reasons: 1) The commercial regulations are relatively complex, and would need to be modified for widespread recreational use, and 2) Extensive outreach/education would be necessary to train all sport trappers how to install a proper destruct panel in their traps, and 3) If there is a problem with the volume of lost recreational trap gear, the Department would most likely look to establish a limit on the number of allowable traps, or reduce the present limits for the fisheries in which trap limits apply. If the author's proposal suggests that sport anglers do not know where their traps are and thus they are susceptible to loss, the Department might consider soak time limits, a requirement that traps be closely attended to, or other measures that ensure that trappers know precisely where their gear is located. There is not conclusive evidence from California's commercial trap fisheries that the destruct device requirement actually functions as intended and confirming that fact would be helpful prior to determining if the measure is warranted for the state's recreational trap fisheries.

**Proposal 3. Require that pots be labeled with the owner's name and contact information.**

Department Response: The Department supports a requirement that every recreational angler who fishes with traps must mark them with a form of identification. The Department will be supporting the use of the "GO ID". This unique number will protect the privacy of the trap owner while providing a unique marking that is verifiable by officers in the field.

**Proposal 4. Prohibit pulling pots (not your own) without the owner's written permission.**

Department Response: These rules are already in regulations in Section 29.80(a)(3), Title 14, CCR.

**Proposal 5. Conforming the 10-crab limit to all sport anglers. Presently, there is an exception for recreational anglers on Bay Area party boats, who are limited to six crab.**

Department Response: Pursuant to Section 29.85, the sport Dungeness crab size limit for anglers fishing on a CPFV is 6 inches, while it is only 5 ¾ inches for anglers that are not fishing aboard a CPFV. Additionally, the bag limit for anglers fishing on a CPFV is six, while for other anglers the limit is 10. These CPFV rules apply only in the counties of Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Monterey. The reason for these differences is that commercial Dungeness interests in the early 1990s were concerned with fishing competition from CPFVs that would set traps and pull them each day distributing the catch to passengers fishing aboard rockfish trips. The practice somewhat mimicked commercial fishing practices, and thus became a crab resource allocation issue. A compromise was reached that allowed the CPFVs to continue the practice, while the bag limit decreased to six per day, and the size limit increased to six inches.

While uniform size and bag limit regulations for all sport fishery sectors would certainly be less complex, the current regulations came about as a compromise between commercial, CPFV and private angler interests and has appeared to work well over the past several years. Both the sport and commercial Dungeness fisheries appear to be thriving, and since the present size and bag limit regulations have been in place for over a decade, the public has grown accustomed to them. At this time there is no compelling reason to change the regulations simply to make them the same for all sport user groups statewide.

**Proposal 6. The 5.75" minimum size for the recreational fishery would be unchanged.**

Department Response: This proposal is ambiguous since minimum size limits for recreational take of Dungeness crab are not currently the same statewide. Does the proposal mean to continue the minimum size limit of 5 ¾ inches for recreational take, not including CPFVs fishing in Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Monterey counties, or to change this CPFV provision to have one recreational size limit throughout the state? Please refer to response to Proposal 5 if it is the latter.