

Proposed California Department of Fish and Wildlife Dungeness Crab Gear Retrieval Program

Scoping Report

California Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project
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I. Introduction

The Dungeness Crab Gear Retrieval Program mandated by SB1287 outlines that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will:

Issue lost /abandoned gear retrieval permits to fishermen; collect fees to fund the program; and not renew Dungeness crab vessel permits (DCVPs) unless retrieval fees are paid.

At the request of CDFW, the California Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project conducted a scoping project to solicit input and feedback from California Dungeness crab fishermen regarding a draft Dungeness Crab Gear Retrieval program designed by the Department to meet these three core responsibilities of the Department (Appendix 1).

A total of 51 Dungeness crab gear permit holders were solicited for comment by Jennifer Renzullo between July 20 – August 6, 2017. Input was obtained via informal, discussion-based in-person meetings at ports and by telephone with fishermen based at the following locations: Crescent City, Trinidad, Eureka, Fort Bragg, Bodega Bay, San Francisco (telephone only), Moss Landing, and Morro Bay. Each meeting built on ideas expressed in previous meetings (i.e. ideas shared in early meetings were shared in subsequent meetings). Informal “votes” in favor of components and ideas were tallied; because some ideas did not arise until later in the interview process, they did not garner as many votes of support, and so number of votes tallied should be used as a general guide only.

II. California Dungeness Crab Gear Retrieval Program Comments

The following tables summarize ideas, comments, and concerns shared by permit holders on the Department's proposed Dungeness crab gear retrieval program.

A. Regarding Department Responsibilities:

1. Issue gear retrieval permits to fishermen

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
19	An unlimited number of permits should be allocated at each port to facilitate a quick clean-up. Program should not be for-profit and should maximize as much involvement as possible. Recovery permits should be free of charge and an unlimited number should be allocated. *Some fishermen asked if they could get an endorsement on their Dungeness permit giving them approval to participate in gear retrieval, rather than being issued a separate formal retrieval permit.
13	5 permits should be allocated to Fort Bragg due to the long coastline. This was a unanimous vote of Fort Bragg fishermen.
13	2 or 3 permits should be allocated per port and should be tied to the person, not the boat, and should be transferrable in case permittee becomes injured or sick. If boat breaks down, they can work on another vessel.
1	2 or 3 permits should be allocated per port. Permits should not be owned or resold (non-transferrable). If a person cannot work, they should relinquish permit to CDFW. Permittee should turn in an active log each season.
21	If multiple people are given permits at each port, many fishermen will scramble for the close-to-home pots and leave the difficult pots in the water.
11	Permits should only be allocated to vessels with a working pump.

2. Notify permit holders about retrieved traps

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
5	Send courtesy letter to all permit holders to remind them to check with CDFW about recovered gear fees. This letter should explain the program and how to find retrieved pot locations and pay fees. (Note that not every participant voted on this because it was assumed that permit holders would be notified of the program requirements once implemented.)

3. Collect payment from fishermen of fees for their recovered traps

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
50	Nearly all Dungeness crab permit holders interviewed were in favor of this recommendation. Fishermen should be able to contact owners and receive payment directly without pots getting turned in to CDFW. Fishermen would like to use this program as teeth for non-payers, and so they propose to submit a CDFW log only for pots not paid for or collected by original owners. One of the last fishermen interviewed suggested the log should be kept for all gear collected to better understand how much gear is being retrieved each year by this program. He thought retrievers could indicate on their log that gear has been paid for and released prior to submitting to CDFW.
23	If the final price for paying the recovery fee exceeds that of a new pot, there is a great risk that fishermen will cut ropes on sanded-in pots.
7	All fishermen interviewed were concerned about unknown fees, but the option to sell gear back directly without turning in to CDFW alleviated this concern for many interviewees.
1	Fees should be charged regardless of whether gear is cut or not. Everybody needs to be responsible for their lost gear.

4. Maintain communication between the retrieving and trap-owner parties

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
32	CDFW should make retrieved gear location information publically available as a link on the CDFW website. This allows fishermen to help collect each other's gear at end of season.
5	There should be a link on the CDFW website to allow permit holders to check where retrieved gear is and fees owed, but they would like this information to be private (e.g. query info using either permit number or L number)

5. Disbursing funds for gear retrieved

When this topic was discussed, fishermen were comfortable with both collecting money directly from compliant fishermen, and in cases of noncompliance, being paid from CDFW.

B. Regarding Permitted Gear Retriever Responsibilities:

1. Store trap(s) retrieved and if not claimed by the owner within a defined time period, will be responsible for trap(s): Dispose, recycle, auction, etc.

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
31	<p>All gear must be picked up by October 31st. Retrievers are not responsible for storing gear past that date.</p> <p>Note that some permit holders chose not to vote on this topic.</p>

2. Provide CDFW with proper documentation (e.g. logbook, invoice) for all traps retrieved under permit

No comments or concerns were discussed on this topic. All fishermen seemed to agree a logbook and/or invoice would be necessary to track retrieved gear.

3. Return traps to owners once a receipt of payment has been issued

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
11	<p>Would like to have some funding to be allocated to each association for storage fees (i.e. \$300 per port per season).</p> <p>Note that this idea arose out of one port, but when shared with subsequent ports, fishermen thought this would be complicated and unnecessary.</p>

C. Program Conditions

1. Gear Retrieval period will begin 2 weeks after the close of season (grace period) and last 4-6 weeks.

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
13	Retrieval period should last until September 30 th to allow for optimal ocean conditions required to pump gear in shallow locations. Most fishermen agreed this was a reasonable amount of time to recover gear.
6	Retrieval period should last until October 15 th to allow for plenty of time to recover gear pending ocean swell and currents.
36	Retrieval period should begin 2 weeks post season closure.
1	Retrieval period should begin the day after season closure to facilitate a quick cleanup.
11	<p>Would like to use trap tag money to purchase a new pump for each port.</p> <p>Note that this idea was supported in one port, but was not supported in subsequent ports due to questionable maintenance and level of complexity.</p>

2. Permitted trap retrievers will only be paid for traps that are identifiable to owner

No comments or concerns were discussed on this topic.

3. There will be a drop-dead date for late trap fee that would end up with a non-renewal permit w/no grace period. Permits then would not be renewed after April 1 the following year.

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
40	Many permit holders liked the idea of reducing permit number by number of unpaid traps recovered. Could renew trap tags annually to help enforce this. This would not work if tags are allocated biannually. Once bill is paid, those tags should be replaced.

14	Would like to see the tag cost reduced if tags are purchased annually.
1	Likes permit reduction idea, but wants to keep biannual tags. Can enforce this with biannual tags as long as replacement tags are not issued. Must be in good standing with all fees paid in order to be eligible to receive any amount of replacement tags.
11	Once the bill is paid the hold on renewing their permit should be lifted. Think permit should not be renewed until bill is paid in full. Thinks it would be difficult to enforce a permit reduction. i.e. Reducing a permit from 500 to 490 if fisherman has not paid for recovery of 10 traps. Permits should not be considered nonrenewable permanently ever.
5	Concerned about delay in season, domoic acid or soft shell issues.

4. Participation in program is voluntary and DCVP vessels will still be able to retrieve traps independently

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns of Dungeness crab permit holders.
26	Permits should not be sold or transferred unless all retrieval fees are paid. There needs to be a way to check that all fees have been paid. When you buy a permit, the purchaser is responsible for all the gear left in the water. Current owner is responsible for all future fees accrued to gear, regardless of incorrect trap tags.
1	There should be some warning to guys that they are responsible for future unsuspected fees related to the purchased permit. This should be added to permit transfer instructions.

5. Additional scoping question to help facilitate in-season recovery of lost and abandoned Dungeness crab gear: Should the number of traps belonging to another vessel on board a permitted Dungeness crab vessel be increased from the existing 6?

# of participants in support of the following statement	Ideas/comments/concerns Dungeness crab permit holders.
30	In-season allotment for having gear belonging to another vessel on board your boat should be increased from 6 to 30 throughout open season.
5	In-season allotment for having gear belonging to another vessel on board your boat should be increased from 6 to 20 during the last 2 months of the season.

5	In-season allotment for having gear belonging to another vessel on board your boat should be increased from 6 to 30 throughout open season, but should be unlimited during last 2 weeks of season.
1	In-season allotment for having gear belonging to another vessel on board your boat should be increased from 6 to 20 throughout open season.
1	In-season allotment for having gear belonging to another vessel on board your boat should be increased from 6 to 30 after the first month of the open season.
1	In-season allotment for having gear belonging to another vessel on board your boat should be increased from 6 to 50 throughout open season.
3	Should be able to retrieve crab pots while sport fishing.