

Public comment letter from John Corbin, Oregon Fishermen, to the
California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF) Executive Committee.
Submitted April 20, 2015.

Rochelle,

These are my notes on the derelict gear programs ran in Oregon and Washington.

We have had 3 people opposed to the program in Oregon. There may be others that are not completely on board with it, but they can't think of a better way to do it.

The program puts many boats and eyes on the water looking in many different spots. Some people are out there to gather gear to sell back to others. Some are there to increase their gear piles and some do a little of both. Either way there are a lot more boats out there looking and the ocean is a lot cleaner than it used to be. More gear coming ashore is also very good PR for the fleet.

It used to be that Oregon fishers could have 6 pots of other fishers on board during the season. That is now 25. There is a lot of gear brought in during the season that is left on the docks for the owner to come down and retrieve for free. In early June when the summer season starts, it is increased to 50 pots that you can be in possession of at one time, all in an effort to help get the stray gear off the water. After the season, there is no limit to the number of pots you can bring in, however, they must be returned to the owner unless you have applied for and received a permit to harvest pots during the gear retrieval program. Then the property rights have been waived and you can do with them as you please. These pots must be logged in and a copy of the log turned over to ODFW at the time of offload. These logs are posted on a website for all to see who might have some of their pots and try to negotiate a deal with the retriever.

ODFW and WDFW both had federal grants to retrieve derelict gear after the season for two years. There was a lot of money spent and it was deemed unsustainable by both states to try to continue the program. The Oregon Crab Commission tried paying boats to go out and pick up gear but there wasn't much interest and some of those that did participate tried to scam the system. Two years of that was enough to determine that it didn't work. When we went to the present system, there was a lot of effort and a good return. And it didn't cost a cent! Washington saw a huge return the first year of their program and after that people didn't just leave their gear in the water anymore. They watched it end up in someone else's gear pile. It changed fishermen's behavior and now there isn't as much gear left out there to harvest. We are hoping to see the same results after this years season in Oregon.

I'm sure there are ways to tweak the program a little and we have challenged the fleet to help us improve it. With governments running low on money, it is a way to clean up our own messes without asking anyone for a handout. We also have a proposal at the Pacific Fishery Management Council to allow trawlers and fixed gear fishers traveling through the RCA to be able to stop and pick up stray gear when they see it. Presently they can not.

The bottom line is that we need to clean up after ourselves or someone will tell us how to do it that has no idea how to do it.

John Corbin

Chairman Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission