

CALIFORNIA DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING GEAR WORKING GROUP

January 3, 2018 Convening

Status Update: 2017-18 Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP) Pilot

The California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) reconvened on January 3, 2018 to continue to evaluate the relative risk of whale entanglements as part of the 2017-18 Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP) Pilot ([click here](#) for more information about the RAMP). In anticipation of the Northern Management Area (OR/CA border south to Mendocino/Sonoma County line) opener on January 15, 2018, and as a follow up to the two previous updates shared with commercial and recreational fishermen ([here](#) and [here](#)), the Working Group would like to highlight the following:

- The delayed northern opener increases the potential for high concentrations of fishing gear in areas of migrating and feeding whales. **To minimize the potential for whale entanglements, the commercial fleet and recreational fishing community are requested to consult and follow the recommendations outlined in the [2017-18 Best Practices Guide](#), with specific attention to the setup of surface gear. Fishermen should be on alert and avoid fishing in areas where there are groups of feeding whales and/or swarms of krill and proceed with caution in the vicinity of submarine canyons.**
- The concentration of humpback whales has been updated from a moderate risk level to a **low** risk level. A chart showing this change since the start of the season is available [here](#). Best fishing practices are still requested to minimize the potential for entanglements, particularly for migrating gray whales which are present in California nearshore waters at this time of year. The Working Group will reconvene in early March 2018 to conduct a mid-season assessment of the risk factors and looks forward to keeping the industry informed of any further updates at that time (or beforehand as needed).

Fishermen, particularly those fishing in the Northern Management Area, are encouraged to share observations of whale activity to help inform the Working Group's efforts. Text 310-738-2665 or email info@cawhalegroup.com.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Working Group advisors will continue to work collaboratively and watch for any changes in risk throughout the 2017-18 fishing season. The Working Group is working with agencies and researchers to evaluate, and be responsive to, the relative risk of entanglements and will continue to inform the industry as new updates are available.

This update will be shared via the [DCTF email list](#), the [Working Group webpage](#), and [CDFW's Dungeness crab webpage](#). For more information about the Working Group's efforts and the 2017-18 RAMP pilot, including opportunities to provide feedback and share your expertise, visit <http://www.opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group> or contact the Working Group at info@cawhalegroup.com.