

CALIFORNIA DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING GEAR WORKING GROUP

April 6, 2018

Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3 Resources and Transportation
Richard Bloom (Chair)
Capitol Office, Room 2003
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0050

Subject: Support for the Governor's 2018-2019 Draft Budget, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Budget (3600) \$500k for Whale Protection Risk Assessment and Management Program

Dear Chair Bloom:

The California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) is writing to express our strong support for the Governor's 2018-2019 draft budget line item related to supporting the implementation of a Risk Assessment and Management Program (RAMP) to ensure whale safe fisheries.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, in partnership with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Ocean Protection Council, have prioritized addressing the recent spike in whale entanglements occurring in California waters. In response to this, a diverse stakeholder group was established to tackle the challenge of reducing the risk of whale entanglements in California Dungeness crab fishing gear. All experts in our field, we are joined with the common goal of supporting thriving West Coast whale populations and a thriving and profitable Dungeness crab fishery.

A core element to our efforts has included the development of the RAMP, a program that identifies circumstances that can elevate risk and involves commercial and recreational fishermen, environmental organization representatives, members of the whale entanglement response network, and state and federal agencies to collaboratively develop pathways to address these situations. The Governor's 2018-2019 draft budget acknowledges the importance of supporting a sustainable Dungeness crab fishery while simultaneously reducing the risk of whale entanglements. The draft budget includes a \$500,000 line item to develop and implement the RAMP, which will evaluate the risk of whale entanglement in real-time and, when necessary, take action to reduce risk, protecting both whales and fisheries.

On January 10, 2018, the Working Group provided a recommendations memo to the Legislature that included securing long-term funding to support RAMP implementation. The Governor's 2018-2019 draft budget carries out this recommendation and allocates essential funding to sustain RAMP coordination and operations, fund research and data gathering to inform the risk assessment process and support future research and development.

We strongly support the Governor's 2018-2019 draft budget line item that would support the long-term implementation of the RAMP to proactively and responsively assess elevated levels of entanglement risk and determine the need for management options to reduce risks to whale populations and maintain a thriving California Dungeness crab fishery. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with the Working Group's Administrative Team with any questions (info@cawhalegroup.com or 310-738-2776) or visit our website at <http://www.opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group> for more information about our work.

Sincerely,
The California Whale Entanglement Working Group
(omits state and federal agency participants)

Jim Anderson, Commercial Fishing, Half Moon Bay

Tom Dempsey, The Nature Conservancy

Calder Deyerle, Commercial Fishing, Monterey Bay Area

Tom Estes, Commercial Fishing, Fort Bragg

Kathi George, California Whale Rescue

Gerry Hemmingsen, Commercial Fishing, Crescent City

Doug Laughlin, Coastside Fishing Club

Bob Maharry, Commercial Fishing, Morro Bay

Tom Mattusch, Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel

John Mellor, Commercial Fishing, San Francisco

Brian Nolte, Commercial Fishing, Oregon

Dick Ogg, Commercial Fishing, Bodega Bay

Kevin Pinto, Commercial Fishing, Eureka

Geoff Shester, Oceana

Andrea Treece, Earthjustice