



Commercial Crab Fishing Fleet Advisory

December 5, 2025

Marine Resources Program
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
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www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP

Fleet advisory for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in all waters off Oregon

To date, in 2025, four confirmed humpback whale entanglements have been reported involving gear attributed by NMFS to the Oregon commercial crab fishery. First, a humpback whale entangled in multiple sets of Oregon commercial crab gear was reported off Pacific City on January 6th. Some of the gear was removed from the whale by an unauthorized party, with at least two buoys still carried by the whale when it swam away. Second, a humpback whale entanglement was observed off Baja California on September 25th but not reported until November. Again, some of the gear was removed from the whale by an unauthorized party. It is possible that additional gear (of unknown fishery origin) was also present, but that is still being investigated by NMFS. Third, a humpback whale entanglement was reported off Moss Landing, CA on September 26th. Several resightings and photographs were used to attribute the gear to the Oregon commercial crab fishery on October 17th. Efforts to respond and disentangle the whale have been unsuccessful to date. Lastly, an alive and entangled juvenile humpback whale stranded near Yachats on November 15th. After carrying out multiple unsuccessful attempts to release the whale and a health assessment by Marine Mammal Stranding Network veterinarians, the response team and on-site veterinarians determined that the most humane course of action was to euthanize the whale, which was carried out in the afternoon on November 17th. A necropsy to assess the overall health of the whale and factors that contributed to this stranding was conducted on November 18th and results are pending.

Each of these reports were confirmed by NMFS using specific rigorous criteria to identify unique instances of entanglement, weed out redundant or spurious reports, and maintain accuracy. In all four cases, the fishery attribution was made based on presence of an ODFW main-season crab buoy tag through photos/videos of the animal with entangling gear and, in some cases, recovery of the gear. In three of the cases, the gear owner was able to be identified and has been or will be interviewed to glean as much information as possible about how the entanglement may have originated. Sufficient information was available to determine that the September 26th case involved derelict gear, and the November 15th case was strongly suspected to involve derelict gear. Additional details about several of these cases are still under investigation by NMFS, ODFW, and entanglement response partners.

ODFW has significant concerns about this rate of entanglements, particularly following the three confirmed humpback entanglements recorded in 2024. Given these events and the high number of crab lines in the water during the first months of the season, ODFW is issuing this **fleet advisory for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in all waters off Oregon**. Crab fishing vessels should remain vigilant and move or avoid setting gear in areas where whales are transiting or foraging to minimize risk of entanglement as much as possible. This advisory is **effective upon the start of the 2025-26 season** and remains in effect through the end of February or until superseded. ODFW will also be strongly considering the potential need to take additional regulatory action this season to further reduce entanglement risk. Potential management measures may include additional depth or pot limit restrictions, closing the season early, additional derelict gear recovery provisions, and area closures.

We remind the fleet of the [crab fishing best practices](#) to help reduce risk of entanglements at all times, but especially when entanglement risk is elevated during times of higher crabbing effort or when higher numbers of ESA-listed humpback whales are present off Oregon. Please remember to:

- Remove any fishing gear you are not actively tending and promptly remove all gear from the ocean when finished crabbing for the season.
- Use the minimum amount of scope required to compensate for tides, currents, and weather.
- Adjust the length of buoy lines when moving pots to shallower water to maintain taut vertical lines.
- Minimize surface gear and ensure no excess line is floating at the surface.
- Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of large feeding aggregations of whales.
- Maintain gear to ensure lines and buoys are in good working condition and clearly marked.
- Bring derelict gear to shore in-season. If unable to retrieve, please report the location of derelict gear to ODFW.

Please share this advisory and reminders about crab fishing best practices to reduce risk of marine life entanglements with your networks. Also, consider reporting whale sightings using the WhaleAlert app and sharing the locations of unusually high whale or sea turtle activity with ODFW and with other fishers. **All entangled marine mammals or sea turtles should be promptly reported by calling 1-877-SOS-WHAlE (1-877-767-9425). Keep a safe distance and do not attempt disentanglement.**

Thank you for taking these important, proactive steps to avoid entanglements and help to provide continued opportunities to harvest crab.

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