

**Draft Meeting Summary
DCTF Executive Committee
Friday, August 14, 2015**

Meeting Participants

EC Members Present Geoff Bettencourt, Bill Blue, Larry Collins, Mike Cunningham, Vince Doyle, Brett Fahning

EC Members Absent Bill Carvahlo

Other Meeting Participants: Tom Barnes, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Pete Kalvass, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Christy Juhasz, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Capt. Steve Riske, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Rachelle Fisher, DCTF Administrative Team
Kelly Sayce, DCTF Administrative Team

Meeting Summary

*All "next steps" are **in bold** below.*

1. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

- The DCTF Administrative Team (Admin Team) explained the role of the Executive Committee (EC).
 - The EC was appointed and approved by the Dungeness crab task force (DCTF) at the [April 2012 DCTF meeting](#). The intent of the EC is to act as an advisory body between scheduled DCTF meetings. The EC cannot make decisions or recommendations on behalf of the DCTF and all discussion topics and ideas generated by the EC must be reported back to the DCTF for consideration and review.
- The Admin Team walked through the [agenda](#) and clarified that the purpose of the call is to address three topics that were discussed in the April and May 2015 EC meetings, including the California commercial Dungeness crab trap limit evaluation, the California Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Program, and whale entanglement.
 - The Admin Team introduced EC members, Ocean Protection Council (OPC) staff, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) staff.
- [Guidelines for providing public comment](#) were briefly reviewed.

2. Updates

- In an effort to maximize the amount of time the EC spends on pressing issues during each call, a summary outlining recent [Admin Team, CDFW, and OPC](#) updates was circulated to the EC in advance of the August 14 call. The update included new data supplied by CDFW highlighting the [maximum potential traps fished by management area and timing of season](#) for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 seasons.
 - The EC did not have any updates to share at this time.

Public comment

- No members of the public commented on this agenda topic.

3. Discuss evaluation of the California commercial Dungeness crab trap limit program, including the EC's review of initial topic areas to focus analysis and assessment.

- The Admin Team reminded the EC that the DCTF is responsible for evaluating the California commercial Dungeness crab trap limit evaluation. The DCTF directed the EC to address this topic

between DCTF meetings to discuss ideas/options and bring back any proposal(s) to a future DCTF meeting for final consideration by the DCTF.

- The Admin Team has been working collaboratively with Carrie Pomeroy, California Sea Grant and ex officio DCTF Member, and Christy Juhausz, CDFW, to support the EC and begin working on the topic; today's discussion provides an opportunity to circle back with the EC to ensure we are approaching the topic in alignment with the EC's vision.
- Dr. Pomeroy shared that the California commercial Dungeness crab trap limit evaluation is being developed in a manner that considers a number of information sources, including previous DCTF discussions, requests outlined in Senate Bill 369, Legislative needs, and efforts to evaluate similar trap limit programs in Oregon and Washington. As a first step, a list of [evaluation topics](#) were developed and shared with the EC.
 - Evaluation topics include access to fishery, distribution of permits over tiers, fishing capacity, effort and catch trends, direct and indirect impacts, programs operation and effectiveness, and program costs.
 - As a next step, Admin Team, Dr. Pomeroy, and Ms. Juhasz will develop associated questions to sufficiently address each topic; the questions are based on a questions raised by DCTF Members related to the trap limit program and to the fishery in general.
 - Example questions include: Has access and entry into the fishery changed since the Dungeness crab trap limit program (DCTLP) took effect? Why has it changed? How have fishery patterns and trends changed since the California commercial Dungeness crab trap limit program was put into place? What factors are causing it and what role (if any) does the California commercial Dungeness crab trap limit play?
 - The evaluation will look at these topics and associated questions to better understand changes in the Dungeness crab commercial fishery, with the understanding that the California commercial Dungeness crab trap limit program may or may not have contributed to any change that is observed/experienced.
 - The EC was asked if the topics align with EC priorities, and/or if there anything missing or anything that might be adjusted from what was presented thus far.
- One EC Member stated that allowing the 175 trap permits to become transferable improved access in the fishery, especially for new fishery entrants. He also expressed that he would like tags to be issued annually instead of biannually to minimize cheating and help better track lost traps. He further explained that the program's accounting should be resolved so that CDFW may reduce the cost of permitting vessels in the fishery.
 - Dr. Pomeroy explained that questions could be posed to address these interests by identifying problematic elements of the program, which can be used to support the DCTF's recommended changes. Information may need to be gathered from a variety of sources to answer these questions. She further explained that at the October 2015 DCTF meeting, a detailed set of questions can be shared with the DCTF to show what information is available and what additional information is needed, including options for collecting that information. She expressed her, Ms. Juhasz and the Admin Team's desire to work with DCTF to determine the best data collection approach to fill data gaps considering limited time and resources.
- One EC Member expressed support for reviewing a draft list of questions and stated that he would like to see questions and data related to changes in fishing capacity. He further explained his interest in vetting a list of questions with his constituents.
 - **The Admin Team will circulate a list of questions associated with each topic in advance of the October 2015 DCTF meeting.**

Public comment

- No members of the public commented on this agenda topic.

4. Revisit EC's role in the California lost fishing gear retrieval program and consider next steps, including reporting back to the California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF).

- The Admin Team reminded the EC that the DCTF identified the development of a California Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Program as a priority topic for the EC to address between DCTF meetings. The EC was requested to discuss ideas/options and bring back any proposal(s) to a future DCTF meeting for final consideration by the DCTF.
- There is a need to discuss how to develop a lost fishing gear recovery program that can function long-term and not rely solely on grant funding (i.e., soft money). During the April 20, 2015 EC call, the EC decided to develop a workgroup to work with CDFW and the SeaDoc Society outside the DCTF/EC structure to allow more flexibility in the discussion. In light of recent personnel changes within CDFW Enforcement, as well as the whale entanglement discussion being closely related to this topic, CDFW and the SeaDoc Society requested the discussion of a gear recovery program be brought back to EC for full discussion. The Admin Team asked if there was interest in bringing the topic back to the EC.
- One EC Member stated that he supported developing a program similar to the lost gear recovery programs employed in Oregon and Washington.
- Many EC Members expressed interest in discussing this topic.
- **An EC Meeting will be held on September 2 in Santa Rosa, CA and by conference call to discuss the lost gear recovery program.**

Public comment

- Tom Weseloh, Senator Mike McGuire's Office, stated that the California Legislature would like to see the EC/DCTF address the lost gear recovery issue rather than have the Legislature make decisions for the fishing community.

Note: Craig Goucher was unable to provide his comments during the call due to technical difficulties. However, he provided the following comments to the Admin Team to be included as part of the meeting record.

- Craig Goucher, Fisherman/DCTF Alternate, stated "I have been doing crab pot recovery in Trinidad the last 4 years. Last year we did it with Jennifer Renzullo. It needs some refinement in my opinion. It can be more thorough than the programs in Oregon and Washington, but it would be more complicated. 75-80% of the gear we recovered each year is stuck and abandoned gear; it is not lost. 20-25% of the recovered gear is truly lost or stray gear. This is why the recovery projects up north would not be very effective here, because pumping crabs pots involves more effort than most people are willing to engage in. Each year this abandoned gear is left by the same people, for the most part. These people need to be held accountable because quite frankly, I am losing interest in cleaning up after them year after year. There are very few people in the northern ports at this point who have interest in doing the recovery work. My suggestion for this to change would be to impound the gear and require the owners of the recovered gear to pay \$100 for each trap regardless of condition, which would be paid to the recovery boat. Hopefully this would motivate people to clean up after themselves. If it didn't, hopefully it would motivate more people to want to participate in the recovery program. The impound fee could not be higher than that or else it would probably result in people going out and cutting off their buoys of the abandoned gear and leaving the rope still attached, making the situation worse. There is a tool to cut these ropes off at the ocean bottom but its unlikely these individuals would utilize them. My reason for participating in this program is I hate getting my gear tangled in gear that is stuck because I then lose my gear. But worse yet 1 stuck pot can wrap up with multiple pots making a real mess. Pots can not be pumped out if 2 are tangled, so that makes the gear recovery project more important."

5. Discuss details regarding the August 20, 2015 whale entanglement information sharing workshop, including possible EC/DCTF support in distributing workshop details/materials to constituents and anticipated next steps following the workshop including continued discussion about whale entanglements at the proposed October 2015 DCTF meeting.

- The Admin Team reminded the group that there will be a whale entanglement discussion on [Aug 20 in Oakland, CA](#). The goal of the meeting is to share available information on whale entanglements and to begin brainstorming ideas on how to address this issue with the Dungeness crab industry, environmental organizations, agency staff,, and interested members of the public.
 - It was confirmed that the Dungeness crab fishery will be the first California fixed-gear fishery to address the whale entanglement issue.
 - Kelly Sayce and Rachelle Fisher will be facilitating the meeting and will not be attending as the DCTF Admin Team.
 - Outcomes of the discussion will be shared with the DCTF for their consideration.
- One EC Member asked why Dungeness crab was being singled out and stated that he would like the lobster, spot prawn, and rock crab fisheries to be invited to the discussion.
 - The Admin Team stated that other fisheries will be directly engaged by CDFW at a later date. However, due to the organization of the Dungeness crab fishery (i.e., the DCTF), it was appropriate to begin the discussion with the Dungeness crab fishery.
 - CDFW explained it would not be possible to include all California fisheries in the discussion at one time as it would create workload issues for CDFW. The goal is to take lessons learned from Dungeness crab and eventually use it to inform discussions other fisheries. CDFW also explained that the data shows that Dungeness crab fishing gear is the most identified gear type associated with whale entanglements and seems like the most logical place to start the discussion.
- One EC Member explained that ship strikes, navy sonar, and other fishery gear types were also responsible for harming whales.
- Another EC Member said there would be value in inviting lobster, spot prawn, and rock crab fishermen to the meeting.
 - The Admin Team explained that other fisheries had been invited.
- The Admin Team stated that after the Aug 20 meeting, a working group will be convened to hone in on short- and long-term strategies that will be brought to the DCTF for consideration at the October DCTF meeting. Although the project team (i.e. CDFW, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and OPC) is thinking there will be one meeting in the northern range of the fishery and another in the southern range of the Dungeness crab fishery, they were open to suggestions from the EC. The Admin Team asked what the representation of the working group should look like and where the meetings should be held.
 - The Admin Team suggested there be consistent representation on the working group and no more than two DCTF Members to avoid conflicts with the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act. They also asked if the working group should be self-selecting or nominated at the August 20 meeting.
 - One EC Member agreed there should be at least two DCTF Members in the working group. He further suggested that representatives be variable based on where each of the meetings are held and should be whoever the project team can get to attend.
 - A number of EC Members stated they would like to see meetings located in each port.
 - The Admin Team asked if the working groups should be open to the public. Some Members said yes, while others stated that there should be a public orientation about the issue and then the working group meeting should be closed to the public.
 - Various EC Members stated they would like to see working group meetings and information sessions up north and south if they are open to the public, while they would prefer these meetings in a central location (e.g. Ukiah) if they were not made public.
 - The Admin Team explained that regardless of where the project team lands on this topic, there will be a summary following the August 20 discussion and all ideas/strategies/recommendations will be brought to the DCTF for full discussion.
- A CDFW staff member explained they were looking to the fleet to help address this issue in an effort to avoid regulatory requirements. He explained that an initial brainstorming session would be needed before the season starts to help identify data gaps, essential information, ideas for voluntary experiments, etc. He further highlighted the importance of CDFW being responsive to

the public requests related to this issue, including the request for voluntary measures and pilot projects prior to the 2015-2016 season.

- One EC Member stated he was unclear how experiments could be employed to test experimental gear types.
- Another EC Member expressed frustration that requests were being made for the commercial Dungeness crab fishing industry to make widespread changes when no clear problem has been identified. The increase in entanglements could be due to increases in whale populations. He asked how the biomass of whales has changed from 2000 to the present. He also explained that the fishery has already implemented a trap limit program that should be considered in these discussions.
- One EC Member asked about the correlation between the number of whales and the incidence of whale entanglements. He explained that the ocean has been unusually warm in recent months and that whales are being seen in smaller geographic areas in the ocean, likely as a result of the water temperatures. He stated it is important to not jump to conclusions without looking at the full picture.
- The Admin Team explained that NMFS will be sharing available data on August 20 to help address these questions. It was further expressed that it is important to ask about the source of the problem and why entanglements are happening to better understand the issue.
- One EC Member stated that the fishing community should try to understand the problem better before suggesting solutions. He explained that shooting from the hip could be harmful and that the fishing community should be more deliberate in their approach.

Public comment

- Todd Whaley, fisherman/DCTF Member, stated he thought the working groups should be open to the public. He stated that the Dungeness crab fishery should accept their part and be proactive in addressing the issue. He believes there are a number of measures that can be utilized to ensure the Dungeness crab fishery and whales can coexist, including shortening the commercial fishing season.
- Justin Yager, fisherman, stated the options for solutions are very limited. Break-away lines and other proposed ideas are unrealistic and will lead to an increase in lost gear. He stated that two pots to a single line is also not a realistic solution. He explained that reducing the number of lines in the ocean by reducing the duration of the fishing season would help address the issue.

5. General Public Comment

- No members of the public provided general comment.

6. Adjourn

- The Admin Team summarized the next steps that emerged from the call discussions.
 - There will be an EC meeting on September 2 in Santa Rosa to discuss a California lost fishing gear recovery program.
 - The Admin Team will continue speaking with DCTF Members, OPC, and CDFW to consider the need for an in-person DCTF meeting in October 2015.
 - The Admin Team will continue supporting the planning of the August 20 whale entanglement discussion and looks forward to keeping the DCTF/EC informed on the results of that discussion.