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F/V's TAASINGE, DEFIANT, Ms. Sam

Members of the California Dungeness Crab Taskforce

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Re: Pot limit structure

Sirs:

This is the sixth crab fishery that I am or have been involved with in my career that has undergone pot limits. History has shown that the top tier recipients benefit the most at a harsh reality to the others. The California plan is by far the most complicated and will be the most expensive. The plan, in my opinion, will also have the most devastating effects on those who are pushing the process and hope to be the prime beneficiaries. The other programs basically prove out that those that caught the most still do; those that struggled went out of business. The California plan looks to me to be one that will put a lot of boats out of business.

The one aspect that is being overlooked is opportunity. Every fisherman is an optimist and craves opportunity. The big seasons are every man's dream but in reality only a few achieve them. Still we all look forward to the coming season and the occasional big season is what supports the boat improvements, home improvements, the extra vacation, etc. If you restrict the opportunity to such a low expectation, you kill the dream and eventually those will drop out.

There are two basic types of fishermen in my opinion. While neither is better than the other, they generally have different fishing styles. There are those who typically fish out of or close to their respective home port and there are those that generally travel to where they feel the best opportunity exists for each particular season. The pot limit program will affect most adversely those that basically always stay near their respective home port. The reason why is that those that travel are already used to fishing with less gear and moving into areas of more crab concentration. Areas such as right in front of Crescent City will no longer be "off limits" to larger boats. Boats that possess and fish both Oregon and California licenses with reduced pot limits will not want to travel any farther than they have to, therefore putting increased pressure on areas typically passed up on.

While I see how this program will work to my personal advantage, I do not support it. There are easier and simpler ways to restrict the fishery, the easiest would be to just set the start date for north of area 10 to January 1. The existing 30 day protection provisions basically require a fisherman to choose an area but do allow movement after the 30 days. This helps adjust fleet pressure coast wide.

As for pot limits, I don't believe the fishery will be better off with them but I would support a simple 300/500 plan similar to Washington and Oregon. This gives more opportunities, 500 pots are adequate for most and 300 is also a good amount for the smaller producers. In the end the disparity won't be as great and the fishery will have a better chance of remaining strong. If you restrict the earning power of individuals too much there will be an onslaught of those financially struggling after the first weak harvest. The low pot limit licenses will be of low value because of the lack of earning potential and will fade out of the fishery. As the harvesters drop out, the support industry disappears.

It is also my opinion that the task force should seriously take into consideration supporting using out of state landings. By not allowing the out of state landings, California will break the Magnuson-Stevens Act /Dungeness Crab Act which would affect the LE 200. The fallout from this would be a disaster not only for the local California crab fishermen but the entire fishery coast wide from Washington to California and including the shrimp fleet. The pot limits will then only be effective inside three miles while allowing unrestricted fishing outside 3 miles. Worse yet would be the possibility of Federal management.

We all need the opportunity to fish and we should pass on to the next generation of fishermen an equal opportunity.

Sincerely,

Mike Haggren