

CALIFORNIA DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING GEAR WORKING GROUP

Research Priorities Statement

July 2017

The California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group) is committed to reducing the risk of whale entanglements in Dungeness crab fishing gear while supporting thriving whale populations and a thriving and profitable Dungeness crab fishery along the West Coast. The Working Group generally supports the funding of research and projects that build on and/or complement the Working Group's efforts to further our goals in generating information related to:

- Increased understanding of whale distribution and factors associated with whale distribution, specifically the overlap of Dungeness crab fishing and whale presence off the California coast (e.g. aerial and vessel-based surveys, whale prediction tools, etc.);
- Enhanced reporting of Dungeness crab fishing effort to inform the overlap between fishing and whales (e.g. tools to track fishing dynamics, etc.);
- Improved recording and interpretation of whale entanglement events; and
- Improved gear setup and trap servicing techniques.

Projects focusing on enhancing communications with fishermen and between state and federal agencies, environmental organizations, and others to share information and solicit support of/participation in our efforts to address whale entanglements in Dungeness crab fishing gear are also a priority.

Efforts to reduce whale entanglements in Dungeness crab fishing gear benefit from collaboration and coordination with researchers and neutral parties outside the Working Group to help steward many of these ideas. The Working Group appreciates the opportunity to work with and learn from researchers, scientists, communications experts, etc. to forward ideas regarding these priority topics. The Working Group welcomes the opportunity to discuss proposed projects and how they might help advance the Working Group's efforts.

Please contact the Working Group Facilitation Team (kelly@strategicearth.com or 310-738-2665) to discuss your project idea(s) and how it aligns with Working Group priorities. We look forward to the opportunity to work together collaboratively.

The Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear 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

Gerry Hemmingsen, Commercial Fishing, Crescent City

Doug Laughlin, Coastside Fishing Club

Kathi Koontz, Whale Disentanglement Network

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

WORKING GROUP BACKGROUND

The Working Group was first convened in 2015 by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, in partnership with California Ocean Protection Council and National Marine Fisheries Service, to address an increase in large whale entanglements in California Dungeness crab fishing gear. The group is comprised of commercial and recreational fishermen, conservation groups, members of the disentanglement network, and state and federal agencies. The body is charged with developing guidance to state and federal managers, the California Legislature, the Dungeness crab fishing industry, the California Dungeness Crab Task Force, and others to avoid/minimize whale entanglements and identify research questions, projects, and/or management measures that can be developed or implemented to address the entanglement issue, including key information gaps. For additional information about Working Group activities visit: www.opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group/.