

California Dungeness Crab Fishing

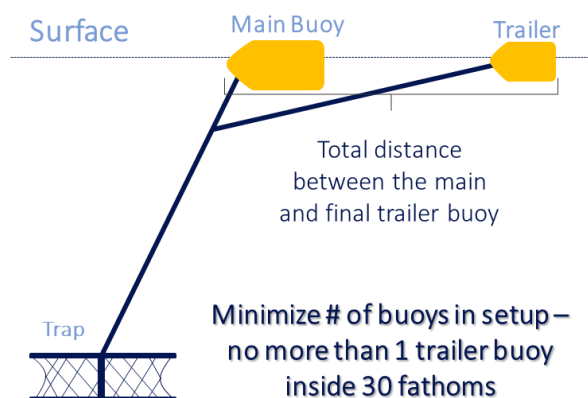
2018-19 Best Practices Guide to Minimize Whale Entanglement Risk



The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has confirmed a significant increase in reports of large whale entanglements over the last few years, specifically in California Dungeness crab fishing gear. This situation threatens the stability of the fishery and coastal fishing communities. Shifts in fishing practices toward increased surface line and the use of multiple surface buoys have been observed. Review of documented entanglements show a potential connection between slack surface line and the number of trailer buoys contributing to whale entanglements. In response, a Working Group developed this Best Practices Guide to highlight voluntary actions believed to be an important step towards reducing the risk of whale entanglement in commercial and recreational fishing gear. New regulatory measures limiting gear at the surface are currently in place for the 2018-2019 California commercial Dungeness crab season.



Buoy Setup: Best Practices (Recommended)



RECREATIONAL

Shortest as possible,
max of 2 fathoms (12 ft)
at any depth

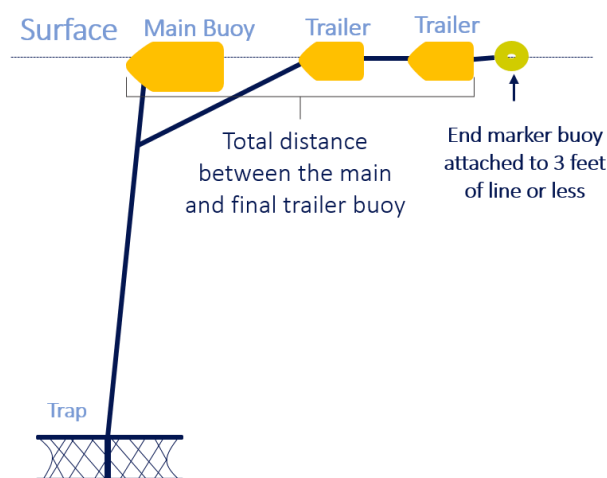
COMMERCIAL

Inside 30 fathoms ——— Shortest as possible,
max of 3 fathoms (18 ft)

30 – 50 fathoms ——— Shortest as possible,
max of 4 fathoms (24 ft)

Outside 50 fathoms ——— Shortest as possible,
max of 5 fathoms (30 ft)

Buoy Setup: Regulations 2018-19 Dungeness Crab Season



RECREATIONAL

No Regulation

COMMERCIAL

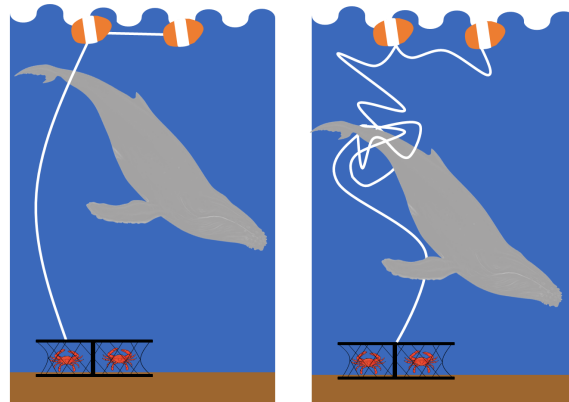
Inside 35 fathoms ——— Max of 4 fathoms (24 ft)

Outside 35 fathoms ——— Max of 6 fathoms (36 ft)

Taking these important, proactive steps to reduce slack surface line will help to provide continued opportunities to harvest crab and maintain the fleet's access to the resource.

BEST PRACTICES

- **No excess lines** should be floating at the surface. Floating line should only be between the main buoy and trailer.
- **When changing set location across depths, adjust the length of trap lines** by adjusting shots (i.e., measured length of line) to maintain taut vertical lines.
- **Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of whales** whenever possible.
- **Communicate the locations of high whale activity** with other fishermen.
- **Maintain gear to ensure lines and buoys are in good working condition** and will not break under natural conditions causing gear to become lost or irretrievable.
- **All gear should be clearly marked** consistent with applicable regulation.
- **Use the minimum amount of scope** required to compensate for tides, currents and weather.
- **Remove all fishing gear by 11:59 pm on the last day of the season** when gear is no longer allowed in the water.



Best practice for line profile: Keep line between pot and main buoy running taut and as vertical as possible

Reporting Entangled Whales

Report entangled whales IMMEDIATELY to the NMFS whale entanglement response hotline at **1-877-SOS-WHALE (1-877-767-9425)** or hail the U.S. Coast Guard on Channel 16. If possible, stand by for responders. Immediate reporting is critical to give the best chance for response teams to remove life-threatening gear from the whale and gather information to understand where, when, and how entanglements occur to reduce potential future entanglements.

By providing information about an entangled whale, you can play an integral role in the disentangling operation. Photographs of the whale, the areas of entanglement, and the entangled gear is a great way to collect important information. Please maintain a distance of at least 100 yards for the safety of you and the whale.



Respond Promptly if Contacted by NMFS or CDFW

If you are contacted by NMFS, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), or any other government agency regarding a whale entangled in your gear please respond and provide as much information as possible about your fishing gear and practices to help the agencies better reduce the risk of entanglements in the future.

Do not attempt to disentangle the whale. Removing the easily accessible lines at the surface will leave the life-threatening lines attached to the whale and may make it impossible for responders to detect and remove these lines. Disentangling a whale can be a very dangerous process and should be left to those trained specifically to do so.

This guide was developed by the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group. For more information, including a fact sheet, background materials, and other key resources like this Guide, visit opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group.



For questions about this Best Practices Guide, email info@cawhalegroup.com. If you have suggestions for reducing entanglements in fishing gear, contact Dan Lawson, NMFS Protected Resources Division, at Dan.Lawson@noaa.gov or 562-980-3209