Whale and sea turtle entanglement is a concern for fishermen, the public, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Ocean Protection Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group developed this guide as part of a proactive and comprehensive approach to addressing entanglements in Dungeness crab gear. Taking these important steps will help maintain the fleet’s access to this valuable resource.

**BEST PRACTICES**

- **ADJUST** trap line length when changing set location across depths by maintaining optimal scope.
- **MINIMIZE** knots, leads and scope when compensating for tides, currents, and weather.
- **ELIMINATE** excess lines floating at the surface. Floating line should only be used between the main buoy and the trailer.
- **REDUCE** slack surface line.
- **KEEP** vertical lines taut.
- **AVOID** setting gear in the vicinity of whales and sea turtles.
- **COMMUNICATE** locations of high whale activity to other fishing boats.
- **REMOVE** fishing gear before 11:59 pm on the last day of the season.
- **PROMPTLY** remove gear not being actively fished.
- **MARK** gear consistent with regulations.
- **MAINTAIN** gear to ensure lines and buoys are in good working condition so they do not break and get lost.
- **RETRIEVE** lost or abandoned commercial Dungeness crab traps as authorized in Title 14, CCR Section 132.2 and 132.7.

**KEEP LINE BETWEEN POT AND MAIN BUOY TAUT AND VERTICAL**
**REDUCE SLACK SURFACE LINE**

**Buoy Setup: Best Practices (Recommended)**
- Surface
- Main Buoy
- Trailer

**Buoy Setup: Regulations**
- Surface
- Main Buoy
- Trailer

**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)

**RECREATIONAL**
- No Regulation

**COMMERCIAL**
- Inside 35 fathoms — Max of 4 fathoms (24 ft)
- Outside 35 fathoms — Max of 6 fathoms (36 ft)

**IMMEDIATELY REPORT ENTANGLEMENTS**
- **CALL NMFS RESPONSE HOTLINE:** 1-877-SOS-WHALE.
- **HAIL THE COAST GUARD:** CHANNEL 16.
- **NOTE** date, time, location and take a photo.
- **STAND BY** for responders.
- **MAINTAIN A DISTANCE OF 100 YARDS** for the safety of you and the whale.
- **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DISENTANGLE** the whale. Removing the easily accessible lines at the surface leaves others attached to the whale and may make it impossible to detect or remove them.
- **RESPOND** promptly if contacted by NMFS and CDFW.

More information at:
opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group
and
wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Whale-Safe-Fisheries

For questions about this Best Practices Guide, email: info@cawhalegroup.com
If you have suggestions for reducing entanglements in fishing gear, contact Dan Lawson at the NMFS Protected Resources Division: Dan.Lawson@noaa.gov or Ryan Bartling at California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Ryan.Bartling@wildlife.ca.gov.
For other related inquiries email: WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov