

**Meeting Summary
DCTF Executive Committee
July 6, 2020**

Meeting Participants

EC Members Present	John Barnett, Geoff Bettencourt, Bill Blue, George Bradshaw, Larry Collins, Mike Cunningham, Gerry Hemmingsen, Zach Rotwein
EC Members Absent	None
Other Meeting Participants	Paige Berube, Ocean Protection Council Ryan Bartling, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Joanna Grebel, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Christy Juhasz, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Cpt. Steven Johnson, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Sonke Mastrup, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Cpt. Bob Puccinelli, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Asst. Chief Mike Stefanak, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife Tom Weseloh, Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture Rachelle Fisher, DCTF Administrative Team Kelly Sayce, DCTF Administrative Team Carolyn Kraft, DCTF Administrative Team Support

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome, introductions, agenda overview.

- The California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF) Administrative Team (Admin Team) introduced and welcomed participants to the DCTF Executive Committee (EC) call. Agenda topics were reviewed. All meeting outcomes including ideas and options developed by the EC on these topics will be shared with the DCTF for consideration during the anticipated October 2020 DCTF meeting.
- The EC is a subcommittee of the DCTF and cannot make decisions on behalf of the DCTF and will report back to the full DCTF with the outcomes of this conference call. The DCTF has directed the EC to begin discussions to address priority topics and help usher DCTF recommendations between DCTF meetings. The [2019-21 Work Plan](#) will guide EC discussions.
- Meeting agreements and [guidelines for providing public comment](#) were reviewed. The Admin Team reminded participants that per the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act, new topics cannot be added to the agenda once it has been posted and the agenda must be posted 10 day in advance of the meeting.
- The call was recorded and will be available for 30 days following the call.

2. Public comments on non-agenda items

- No public comments were received.

3. Updates on issues involving the Dungeness crab fishery, including, but not limited to, the status of the DCTF recommendations identified during the October 2019 in-person meeting, Oregon's potential gear marking requirement, the Dungeness crab account, domoic acid, replacement tags, DCTF commercial fishing elections, marine life entanglements, etc.

- *Disaster Relief:* CDFW shared that fishermen who suffered losses during the fire at San Francisco's Pier

45 can submit waivers for catastrophic loss to Ruth Flores, the License and Revenue Branch, by August 15, 2020, the deadline to submit the between-season replacement tag form. CDFW has been in touch with the San Francisco Crab Boat Owners Association with the details.

- *Recreational Dungeness Crab Fishery:* The California Fish and Game Commission is discussing regulatory changes to the recreational crab fishery to reduce marine life entanglement risk. The changes most likely won't be adopted and in place until the 2021-22 fishing season. Discussions are continuing at upcoming [Fish and Game Commission meetings](#).
- *Oregon's Potential Gear Marking Requirement:* The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife recently adopted a line marking requirement for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is discussing a similar regulatory update. While the Oregon discussions are ongoing, the California Dungeness crab industry should consider impacts to the California fishery. EC Members identified this as a priority topic for a future DCTF meeting to consider how the California fleet may be impacted and avoid having the Dungeness crab fishery be penalized for unknown entanglements.
- *Domoic Acid:* CDFW is meeting with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to develop biotoxin management zones and coordinate on domoic acid testing. CDFW stated that vessels doing domoic acid sampling will be required to have an electronic monitoring device onboard to better track and verify the collections of domoic acid samples. Sampling is expected to begin in September. CDFW has not heard any potential issues in the timely processing of samples as a result of COVID-19, but CDPH is only able to process 30 samples/week. Fishermen interested in participating should reach out to Christy Juhasz (Christy.Juhasz@wildlife.ca.gov). Since CDFW can not access VMS data, it will not be used for domoic acid testing. While other options are still under investigation, solar loggers are the tool being considered for this season. Solar loggers may be available for the effort and fishermen are encouraged to contact Kathi George (kathikoontz@gmail.com) to obtain one.
 - *Domoic Acid Disaster Funding:* When the disaster relief funds were made available in 2019 in response to the 2015-16 season domoic acid closures, there were funds set aside for research. CDFW initiated a process to solicit research proposals. Proposals have been reviewed and scored and awards will be made shortly. Members of the Dungeness crab fishing industry participated in the review process. Once projects have been formally awarded, CDFW is open to sharing details about the selected projects at a future DCTF meeting. There may be interest by members of the industry in supporting/engaging in the projects.
- *DCTF Elections:* The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) shared that ballots have been tallied and those elected have been contacted to confirm their willingness to serve. OPC and CDFW are working with legal counsel to confirm there are no Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act violations with those elected Members who also serve on the CA Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group. Once this has been resolved, election results will be posted on the website and sent out through the DCTF listserv.
- *Dungeness Crab Trap Tag Account :* CDFW is preparing accounting documents with the new FISCAL accounting system. A 2018-19 draft has been completed and is under internal review. The goal is to have the 2018-19 and 2019-20 documents ready to share by the October DCTF meeting, if not sooner.
- *DCTF Contract:* DCTF had requested that the two year contract to fund DCTF administration be increased from \$75,000 to \$150,000K annually at their October 2019 meeting. At a March 2020 legislative hearing Director Bonham confirmed CDFW's intention to augment the funds available to the DCTF. However, due to COVID-19, CDFW is only able to amend the current contract by adding an additional \$40,000 instead of \$75,000 to completely fulfill the DCTF's recommendation.

Public Comment

- No public comment was received on this agenda item.

4. Discuss and consider priority topics for the DCTF's future agendas, including, but not limited to: a. *Ability to sell the crab caught when retrieving another persons' gear with an in-season waiver*; b. *Updates to the 96-hour rule*; c. *Updates to the Dungeness crab commercial trap limit program to move from biennial to annual trap tags*; and d. *Management Strategy Evaluation*.

- A number of topics have been brought to the Admin Team's attention that folks would like the DCTF to address. Being mindful of the group's time and capacity, the EC discussed four recent requests and identified priorities.
- *Ability to sell the crab caught when retrieving another persons' gear with an in-season waiver*: If a permitted vessel receives a waiver to retrieve someone else's gear, that person is not able to land the crab in the traps. An EC Member is interested in recommending that the regulations be amended so the individual retrieving the gear may land the crab thereby incentivizing gear retrieval and/or relocation.
 - An EC Member explained that sometimes a vessel becomes disabled for a variety of reasons (e.g., engine failure, mechanical problems, personal health issues, etc.) and fishermen are unable to retrieve their gear. Or they are unable to relocate their gear into lower risk areas when a storm is approaching. If their gear is not retrieved or relocated, the result is economic injury to the permitholder and a risk of whale entanglement from unretrievable gear (e.g., lost or stuck gear).
 - EC Members discussed the pros and cons to addressing this issue. Some noted that allowing a fisherman to retrieve someone else's gear and keep crab could create loopholes that allow abuses (e.g., fishing the gear instead of retrieving it thereby increasing their trap allocation). An EC Member suggested retrieving another person's gear could result in financial loss to the retriever. He suggested that the activity only be allowed once or twice a year to prevent abuse. CDFW stated that enforcement issues waivers to retrieve gear, but not move gear or sell crab. Fishermen may return the retrieved gear to the water once the disability is resolved. CDFW is open to discussions allowing the sale of the crab as part of the waiver process. Generally, EC Members were open to continuing to discuss this issue if there was a way to address loopholes and abuses.
- *Updates to the 96-hour rule*. An EC Member stated that the 96-hour rule makes sense at the beginning of the season when fishermen are tending gear frequently, but in the spring fishing transitions to more of a soak fishery and the 96-hour rule becomes difficult to comply with.
 - Some EC Members thought the regulation did not need amending and could have negative impacts on the marine life entanglement issue. Others believed a change to the rule would be helpful to address the change in fishing behavior at the end of the season. An EC Member pointed out that many fishermen already service their gear less frequently at the end of the season and a regulatory change would reflect reality.
 - CDFW said they are open to discussing a change similar to other state fisheries' gear servicing requirements (e.g. 1 week allowed in the California spiny lobster fishery). However, it will be important to ensure that potential changes don't cause unintended consequences such as marine life entanglements.
 - The Admin Team noted that this topic was discussed a few years ago, but the DCTF hadn't considered it a priority at the time. The Admin Team noted if the DCTF wanted to request a change to the 96-hour rule, legislation would be required.
- *Updates to the Dungeness crab commercial trap limit program to move from biennial to annual trap tags*. Christy Juhasz, CDFW, shared a [worksheet of projected balances resulting from adjustments to buoy tag fees](#) in response to a request from the DCTF at the October 2019 DCTF meeting for estimates on the costs of switching from a biennial to an annual trap tag.
 - The timeline projects 10 years (five biennial periods), to show trends over time with a sunset date of 2029. The information is based on estimates and the current cost of processing tags. It doesn't account for unique circumstances that fluctuate each year (e.g., years when the DCTF

administrative contract is not fully spent, and remaining funds return to the Dungeness crab account). The Admin Team noted that changing to annual trap tags would require legislation.

- An EC Member thought annual trap tags would be easier for fishermen and expressed interest in having the fleet look at this issue closer. Another EC Member expressed concern about paying full value for tags each year if the season closes early and urged a cautionary approach. Another EC Member stated that fishermen from his port thought this was an important issue.
- *Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)*. Jenn Humberstone, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), shared information about an MSE for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery that is underway by TNC in partnership with researchers at UC Santa Barbara.
 - The purpose of the MSE is to identify and evaluate management strategies that are optimal for fishermen, fishing communities, fishery managers, and marine resources under an increasingly dynamic ocean environment. TNC chose to look at the Dungeness crab fishery based on its economic importance, sensitivity and exposure to impacts associated with climate change (including domoic acid, etc.), recent west coast fishery closures, and recent increases in marine life entanglements. The goal of the MSE is to identify and better understand the different types of management strategies that will maximize ecological and economic outcomes for the CA Dungeness crab fishery, while minimizing public health and entanglement risks. TNC is looking for input on how best to proceed with the project including seeking targeted input before August 15, 2020. TNC will be hosting a webinar on July 27, 2020 for anyone who is interested in speaking directly with the research project team and learning more about the project. If of interest, TNC can present project findings at a future DCTF or EC meeting. TNC is also planning to present the study at an Entanglement Science Workshop in late August - early September that will be hosted by TNC and OPC, in partnership with NOAA, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and state Dungeness crab fishery managers from CA, OR and WA.
 - EC Members discussed the goals of the MSE and whether there would be information available to share about the potential outcomes being considered for the study. TNC explained that the MSE is looking to maximize economic and ecological inputs and model the issues facing the Dungeness crab fishing industry. TNC will work on developing a written product to summarize the findings of the MSE. EC Members were supportive of the MSE and requested to be informed about the project at the next DCTF meeting.
- Informed by the above discussion, EC Members individually scored each of the four topics to identify how to prioritize the topics. The topics were scored on a scale of 1-4 (with 1 being the highest priority and 4 being the lowest priority). The average score for each topic was:
 - 2.8 - Ability to sell the crab caught when retrieving another persons' gear with an in-season waiver
 - 2.1 - Updates to the 96-hour rule
 - 1.3 - Updates to the Dungeness crab commercial trap limit program to move from biannual to annual trap tags
 - 1.3 - Management Strategy Evaluation
- Based on these results, the Admin Team will prioritize "Updates to the Dungeness crab commercial trap limit program to move from biennial to annual trap tags" and "Management Strategy Evaluation" for future EC/DCTF meeting agendas. The other two topics will be added to agendas in the near-term as time allows.

Public Comment

- No public comment was received on this agenda item.

5. Discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on the commercial Dungeness crab fishery, implications for the 2020-21 fishing season and beyond, and potential opportunities to address identified impacts.

- EC Members stated that COVID-19 had wide-ranging impacts on the fleet. When shelter-in-place started,

the price dropped drastically, Asian live markets closed, restaurants shut down, and things felt grim. While the fleet is concerned and continues to speculate about what's going to happen during the 2020-21 season due to the ongoing pandemic and demand for crab being lower, EC Members didn't think there was anything the DCTF could recommend to address the situation at this time and did not request a future check-in on the topic.

Public Comment

- No public comment was received on this agenda item.

6. Adjourn

- The EC identified the following topics as highest priority for future DCTF and EC meeting agendas: updates to the Dungeness crab commercial trap limit program to move from biennial to annual trap tags, learning about updates from TNC on the MSE, and line marking.
- The Admin Team summarized the next steps that emerged from the call discussion. The following next steps were identified in addition to the next steps listed in the summary:
 - **The Admin Team will:**
 - **Produce a summary of this conference call and post it on the DCTF webpage once it has been reviewed for accuracy by the EC.**
 - **Develop an agenda for the August EC meeting and circulate it in accordance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act.**
 - **The Admin Team will share information about the July 27 webinar through the DCTF listserv.**
 - **Continue to track the COVID-19 discussion offline.**
 - **Assist in CDFW sharing information about the domoic acid mitigation research projects that are funded when the announcement is made, as appropriate.**