



CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Ocean Protection Council

FROM: Cina Loarie, Project Manager
Rachelle Fisher, Independent Consultant

DATE: March 3, 2010

RE: Dungeness Crab Task Force: Progress To-Date and Next Steps

ATTACHMENT: (1) [OPC staff recommendation](#) – March 2009
(2) [Legislative Report #1](#) – The January 15, 2010 report from the Dungeness Crab Task Force to the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Fish and Game Commission
(3) [Vote Summary](#) – February 17-18, 2010 Meeting

Staff has generated this memo to provide Council members with an update on the progress of the California Dungeness crab task force (task force) to-date and the anticipated next steps, including the potential for future Ocean Protection Council (OPC) involvement. The efforts of the task force thus far represent a novel approach to evaluating fishery management issues in California. Learning from its successes and failures could guide the establishment of similar task force efforts in the future, as well as other cooperative approaches to fisheries management and reform. This memo does not recommend any action to be taken at this time.

BACKGROUND:

Senate Bill 1690 (which added Section 8276.4 of the California Fish and Game Code) requires the establishment of a 27-member task force to review and evaluate California Dungeness crab management measures and make management recommendations. The OPC is designated as the entity to develop and administer the task force. The goal of the task force is to provide recommendations concerning Dungeness crab fishery management to the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (Legislature), the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC).

Task Force Composition

OPC staff began seating the task force in December 2008 by administering an open election process for the 17 commercial fishing seats. DFG provided 2 representatives to serve on the task force and California Sea Grant provided 1 representative. On March 17, 2009, the OPC appointed an additional 7 non-commercial fishing members to the task force and approved \$275,000 for its administration.

Legislative Reports

The 27-member task force has held five public meetings in various regions along the California coast between May 2009 and February 2010. On January 15, 2010, the task force submitted a report to the Legislature, DFG, and FGC outlining recommendations to change the management of the Dungeness crab fishery (See Attachment 2 – Legislative Report #1). While this report fulfilled the core mandates of SB1690, the task force had additional issues to discuss and recommendations to refine. Therefore a final meeting (Meeting 5) was held on February 17 and 18, 2010 to discuss and vote on a new set of recommendations that build upon those in the January 15, 2010 report. The DCTF intends to submit Legislative Report #2 to the Legislature, DFG, and the FGC no later than March 31, 2010.

FEBRUARY 17-18, 2010 MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE (MEETING 5)

At Meeting 5 in Ukiah, CA, the task force discussed goals and objectives for the Dungeness crab fishery, potential restrictions on latent permits, a pot limit program, modifying regulations in the Dungeness crab sport fishery, the future of the California shell testing program, and the need for a permanent Dungeness crab advisory committee. Attachment 3 provides the summary of the task force's recommendations (the "Vote Summary").

Overview of Recommendations

At Meeting 5, the task force voted on several recommendations that will be included in the task force's second report to the Legislature, DFG, and FGC. These recommendations include the following topic areas:

- *Fishery Management Objectives* – The task force voted on short- and long-term objectives for the Dungeness crab fishery including: Reducing the existing capacity of the commercial fleet; establishing a permanent definition of "latent permit"; and reducing the potential threat of latent permit activation.
- *Pre-Season Crab Quality Testing* – The task force recommended an amendment to the Fish and Game code that identifies a stable funding source for the Tri-State Agreement's pre-season Dungeness crab quality testing in areas north of Point Arena.
- *California Pot Limit Program* – In order to fulfill the DCTF approved objectives, the task force recommended the creation of a statewide two-year, multi-tiered pilot pot program in California. Implementation of the program would be coupled with a procedure that would allow for appeals and grievances. The recommendation further states that the program would undergo performance review at the end of two years.
- *Consideration of management tools* – The task force voted in support of the use of total allowable effort (e.g. limited entry and a statewide tiered pot program) and the continued use of 3S (sex, size, season) principles as management tools in the California Dungeness crab fishery. The task force voted that they did not support the use of total allowable catch or catch shares as management tools in the California fishery.
- *Advisory Committee* – The task force recommended that an industry-funded Dungeness crab advisory committee should be created. The task force supported the continuation of the DCTF for an additional three years.

Potential future roles for OPC

Future OPC involvement in the affairs of the California Dungeness crab fishery may include project funding, and/or OPC staff time for project coordination or administration. Given the recent completion of the final meeting of the task force, the extent of OPC future involvement merits further discussion and evaluation among staff, the task force, the public, and management entities. Staff intends to continue examining the extent to which the recommendations of the task force coincide with the goals and objectives of the OPC and may bring action items regarding Dungeness crab for approval by the OPC in

the future. Any future participation of OPC will be influenced by project appropriateness, staff availability, and other OPC fiscal limitations. Please note that unless the legislature offers an extension, the term of the task force will expire on January 1, 2011.

In any event, OPC staff has committed a limited amount of staff time to continuing the administrative efforts of the task force through March 31, 2010 to aid in the completion of the task force's March 31, 2010 Legislative Report #2 to the Legislature, DFG, and FGC.