

October 4, 2016

To our fellow Dungeness crab fishermen,

As you know, the increase in reports of whale entanglements along our coast has raised concerns for many in the public. Obviously, there isn't a single fisherman in our fleet that would ever intend to entangle any animal and many have dedicated their time and expertise to address this issue in a way that reduces the risk of entanglements while preserving our fleet's access to the crab resource and to profitable fishing opportunities.

In response to the issue, a collaborative Working Group was established including many leaders from our industry as well as managers, sport fishermen and conservation groups. In addition to efforts to better understand the issue, this Working Group has reviewed information around known entanglements with crab gear. One driver of entanglement risk appears to be excess floating or trailing line and buoys at the surface. While all recognize that some slack and surface buoys are essential to fishing operations, too much unnecessarily increases the risk of entanglements.

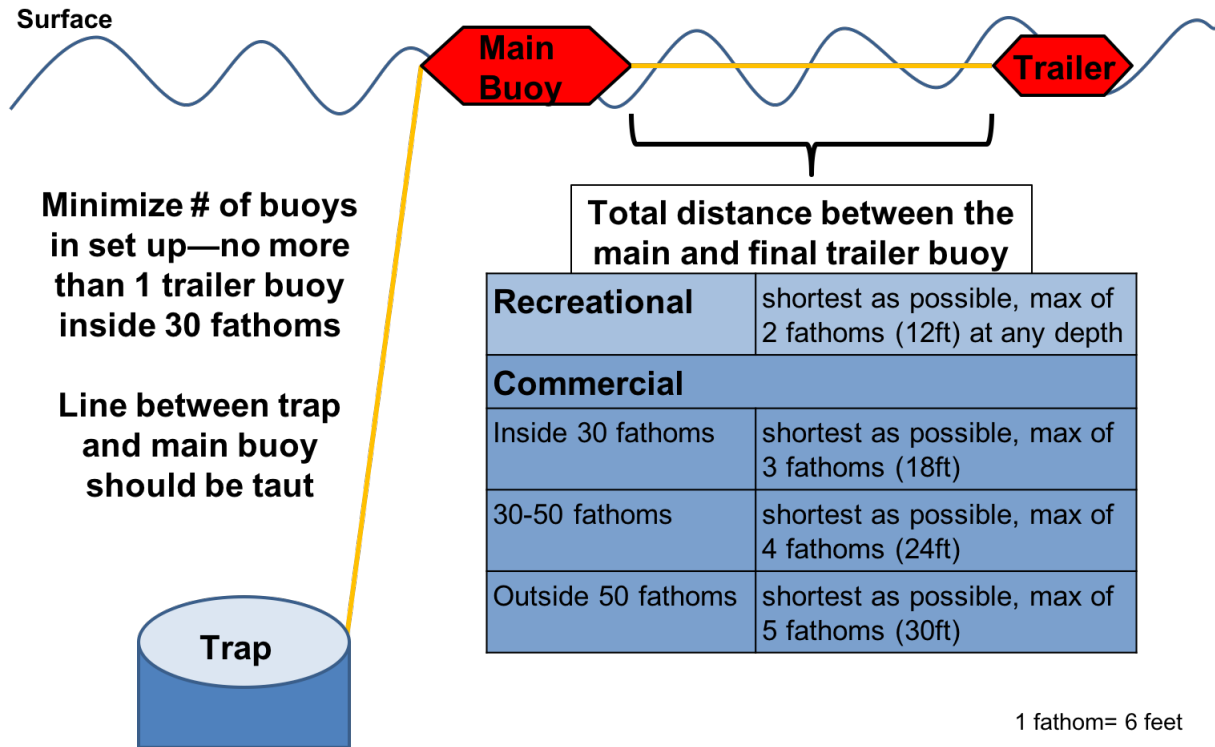
As a result of the Working Group's discussions and a range of discussions with active Dungeness crab fishermen in a number of port communities, recommendations have been made for voluntary adoption of 'best practices' that limit the amount of floating or excess line and trailing buoys. Our fishing associations and organizations wanted to pass along our collective and strong support for these recommendations.

In order to steps toward preserving access to our fishing grounds and building a stable and profitable fishery, we believe it's critical to do everything possible to reduce the risk of entanglements in our gear. Adopting these best practices throughout the fishery would be an enormous step toward that shared goal.

## **2016-17 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.
- **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. Lost gear contributes to marine debris and increases the risk of whale entanglements.
- **All gear should be clearly marked** consistent with applicable regulation. All gear should be maintained so markings are clearly legible to facilitate correct identification of the origins of the gear involved in entanglements.
- **Use the minimum amount of scope** required to compensate for des, currents and weather, as necessary. Whales are more likely to become entangled with slack lines, which can potentially create a "floating snare".

## BUOY SET-UP BEST PRACTICES



We urge all fishermen to follow these recommendations as closely as possible. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the leadership of any of our organizations. We also encourage you to visit <http://opc.ca.gov/whale-entanglement-working-group/> to learn more about the Working Group's efforts, including the development of a Best Practices Guide. Working proactively and together, we can all ensure that our fishery continues to be a model of success and a driver for thriving fishing businesses and port communities.

Sincerely,