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The Dungeness Dispatch

ODCC—MORE THAN JUST MARKETING

The recent settlement between the California Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations and the Center for Biological Diversity (leading to the early closure of the season there) has had several things come out of it. Among the shock waves felt throughout Washington and Oregon was, surprisingly, a renewed interest in just what it is the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission actually does for the money assessed to the fishermen.

To backtrack a bit, in August 2018, CBD sent a letter to WDFW requesting a call to explore ways to reduce the risk of entanglements in our fisheries and there was a call with CBD representatives in November that included proposed next steps. In December, WDFW sent a similar letter to NMFS indicating the intent to apply for an Incidental Take Permit under Section 10 of the ESA. Oregon is now, also, moving ahead with the application process for an ITP.

It is estimated it will take about 18-24 months to complete the application, and the NMFS review and Biological Opinion development process can take an additional 2-3 years, depending on available staff resources. (There is more on this issue on page 4).

But, throughout this process, your Crab Commission has been involved in many ways behind the scenes. Although, it seems to many that we are still seen solely as a marketing association. While that is, obviously, central to our noted mission it is not all that we do.

As you will read about in this issue, some of the things our staff has been busy with in recent months has been working the back-channels as advocates to help protect the fishery’s interests in a variety of causes.

We met with Congressman Kurt Schrader, as part of an annual roundtable discussion, to make sure he was up-to-date on all of the issues facing our fleet before he headed back to Washington. We took part in talks with the Whale Entanglement working group, and brought suggestions back to our board as to how we could help alleviate some of the financial burden that would be coming from new rules being handed down. We have met with representatives of Cassidy & Associates, DC lobbyists and former members of Peter DeFazio’s office, who heard about our need for dredging and improvements to data buoys, among other issues. There were also several discussions held during the recent Tri-State meetings in Portland. These are just to name a few.

In short, your commission never stops working on the marketing side to enhance the image of Oregon Dungeness Crab, but there is a lot of work that is also going on in the hallways, meeting rooms and on the telephones to advocate for the fishermen that isn’t seen on TV or social media. We do try to highlight them in these newsletters, however.

LANDINGS DOWN/VALUE UP

The 2018-2019 season picture still is not finalized, but a big chunk of the puzzle is already in place. While landings are just above the 10-year average, they are down a bit from recent seasons. The most recent numbers from the state show over 18-million pounds landed.

But, the value of the crab is way up. Numbers have already surpassed the second-highest ex-vessel amount for a whole season, with over \$66-million brought in. Just two seasons ago, \$62-million was the record for a whole season.



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Our Mission

- To enhance the image of the Oregon Dungeness crab industry, and to increase opportunities for profitability through promotion, education and research.



TRI-STATE MEETING HELD IN PORTLAND

The Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission made the trip to the Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee Meeting (held, once again, in Portland). Observing, and weighing-in when possible, on the talks around creating flexibility in the season opening protocols, information sharing and coordination of whale entanglement risk reduction measures in Dungeness Crab gear, and Incidental Take Permit development. Also, there was some discussion about finding consistency in crab biotoxin management.

The states did agree to allow more than one line, based on meat quality, instead of the current one line limit. They also moved to extend the “drop dead” date to start the season, based on meat quality, from January 15 to February 1—but, only

if the meat quality is still less than 23% and there are no other concerns about delaying. Those other concerns could include migrating whales that may increase entanglement risk or biotoxin events.

One major potential shake-up is still being discussed at the time of this newsletter. The states are considering decreasing the meat quality criteria below Cascade Head, from 25% to 24%, in order to help expedite the start of the season.

ODFW sent out a notice to all commercial crab fishermen in June seeking their input on the proposed change. We will keep you updated on the outcome on our oregondungeness.org website.

“All three states committed to getting ...input and reaching a decision in time to implement (changing meat criteria) for the 2019-20 season.”

CONGRESSMAN HOLDS ROUNDTABLE

The ODCC represented the interests of our crab fishermen at the annual Newport roundtable meeting, convened by Congressman Kurt Schrader.

The Congressman Tweeted out, at the time: “Oregon Coast Fisheries are some of the most successful and sustainable in the world and it is critical that we convene industry professionals and policy makers to ensure it stays that way!”

We filled the congressman in on the issues facing the Oregon Dungeness fleet, including the Whale Entanglement issue and possible future re-introduction of Sea Otters.

The congressman continues to be a strong advocate for our fishery and a willing listener to our concerns.

TRI-STATE MEETING HELD, CONT'D

“In combination,” according to the ODFW notice, “these three measures will allow for earlier openings in smaller areas where crab quality is good.”

A complete summary of agreements from the Tri-State meeting can be found on the [Pacific States Marine Fish Commission's website](#).

As for the confusion that erupted at the start of the season over the biotoxin limit, the Tri-State leaders decided to draft and send a letter to the FDA, pressing for a rapid and official clarification on the Domoic Acid action level for crab viscera.

They are asking that the language in their statement to be made explicit on whether the action level for domoic acid in crab viscera is - “equal to or greater than 30 ppm” (consistent with other FDA action levels). - or “greater than 30 ppm” (which is not consistent with other FDA action levels).

*** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration responded with a letter in early July. However, it did not seem to completely clarify the issue.

So, Congressman Kurt Schrader responded with a letter on July 19th, to director Susan Mayne, asking for an expedited response with more detail. He writes:

“Action levels are defined by your agency as ‘limits at or above which FDA will take legal action to remove products from the market.’ The July 9th letter to Congressman Huffman states that the ‘FDA will take action when Domoic Acid is present at greater than 30 ppm.’ This is still unclear regarding the specific action level in Dungeness crab viscera, and it is inconsistent with how all other action levels are defined by your agency.”

It goes on to request that “clear guidance” be received by the FDA no later than September 30, 2019.



Our Oregon Dungeness Crab starred at the culinary world's version of the Oscars. Chef Vitaly Paley served a stunning dish at the James Beard Foundation Awards, in May.

MARKETING REPORT: A STARRING ROLE

Some of the biggest bang for our marketing buck, came out of Chicago at the end of the last quarter.

The Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission was proud to help renowned Portland Chef Vitaly Paley spread the word about our delicious bounty to the world, at the James Beard Foundation Awards!

Our Culinary Ambassador, Chef Leif Benson attended - to be on hand to assist if and when he could—and he returned with rave reviews for the product. Chef Vitaly had utilized it in an Oregon Dungeness Crab 7-layer Dip, with Grass Fed Bacon, Cured Sumac and Oregon Dulse.

The awards show was later condensed for a playback showing on ABC, with our crab dish getting a moment or two of air time. Not bad, all in all, for the cost of donated product. You can find out more about the James Beard Foundation on their [website](#).

Another success was our first-time partnership with [Savor Cannon Beach](#). Oregon Dungeness Crab Month went exceptionally well, organizers tell us, with record ticket sales. In addition to their brochures distributed throughout the community for the month, their Facebook posts reached over 8,100—with 461 engagements and over 130 landing page link clicks.



Fishing For Future Industry Workers

The worker shortage is a very real issue around all parts of the Oregon Dungeness Crab fishing industry.

So, the commission has been getting out to Job Fairs over the past couple of years to spread the word about all that the fishery has to offer.

But, we broke new ground in April, reaching out to a younger audience by attending our first "career night" at a middle school (Sunset in Coos Bay).

Last October, our board chair was [interviewed for Portland Business Monthly](#) about the issue.

“What troubles me,” John Corbin said, “is that we’re not replacing the people who are retiring. The average age of people working on a boat is over 50. That’s true of most of the marine sector — shipping, towing and the like. I think it’s because people are maybe getting programmed into going to college. We need to get on the kids’ radar. With the rising costs of college, there is an opportunity for us.”

Events like this can help us get on the radar even earlier.

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Well, we're getting close to the end of the season and it's been a good one. As of writing this, we have caught 18.7 million pounds of crab with an ex-vessel value of \$66.6-million, this year.

It takes all of us in this business to make it work. Big boat, small boat, winter fishers and summer fishers. Whether we catch a large amount of crab or a smaller amount, this fishery belongs to us all and we all need to have a voice in it. This includes the processors as well. Without them, most of us would not have a place to sell our product and the ability to circulate it around the globe.

The term "It takes a village", is alive and well here. It takes us all to keep Oregon's iconic state crustacean, Iconic!

Your Dungeness Crab Commission also just got back from the Texas Restaurant Association tradeshow in Houston. This took place just as Hurricane Barry was sweeping in to the east of them. Once again, Oregon Dungeness was the showstopper! Your public member and Culinary Ambassador, Chef Leif Benson, cooked 2,000 crab cakes for the people at the show. Demand far overtook supply and he couldn't cook them fast enough.

We plan to have meetings in Astoria and Brookings before we get to pre-season testing and all the preparations for a new season. ODFW will also be holding town hall meetings this fall in the coastal ports.

Be sure to try to attend these meetings when you can. This is your fishery and your voice counts!!

-John Corbin/Commission Chair

WHALE ENTANGLEMENT ISSUE

Two major developments have taken place, in regards to the whale entanglement issue, since the last issue of the newsletter.

First, [ODFW instituted temporary rule changes for the end of this season](#). Those included the elimination of the two-week post-season "clean-up" period, calling for all crab gear to be out of the water by August 14, 2019. And, increasing the amount of derelict gear that may be retrieved from August 15 through August 29 from 50 pots to an unlimited amount.

The moves are being made in the hope of reducing whale entanglement risk.

"These actions will reduce vertical lines in the ocean that pose an entanglement risk to whales."

The second major development took place in Newport, where the Whale Entanglement working group met and decided that it was time to take a step back.

The group will go into a sort-of self-imposed hiatus, as the various members now look to work with management on the tricky task of

implementing upcoming changes to the fishery.

The Commission once again stepped-up, too. In May, the board voted to fully fund the \$25-thousand dollars it will cost ODFW to have double-sided tags for next season. Allowing the cost of tags to remain the same for our fishermen next season. The new tags will help improve our understanding of entanglement events, and which gear may or may not be involved.

Because our Oregon's Dungeness crab fishery is at risk of entangling ESA-listed species, and because an Incidental Take Permit is required for the incidental take of ESA-listed species, ODFW is also applying for an ITP from NMFS.

So, our board also approved \$100,000 Funding assistance for one Full-Time ODFW staff member to work on the ITP, covering salary, benefits and supplies.

BOSTON REWIND

In March, The Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission (as part of Seafood Oregon) joined more than 22,150 seafood industry professionals from around the world in Boston for [Seafood Expo North America/Seafood Processing North America](#), North America's largest seafood trade event. The expo drew 1,329 exhibitors from 49 countries and spanned 256,690 net square feet of exhibit space.



For the exhibiting companies, it's one of the main platforms in this industry where you can tell your story to a broad audience.

Once again, people flocked to our booth to get a chance to sample our awesome product and listen to our story.

On the purchasing side, 600 key buyers held meetings with international suppliers.

We brought back about 80 solid leads that were then passed along to our partner processors, and a list of those processors was also delivered to the companies on our lead list. As we seek to help make a connection.

We spoke with many hundreds more, but try to save the lead retrieval list for those who are truly interested in, and capable of, making buying connections with our partners in Oregon. Part of our task is sifting through those hundreds and finding the most optimal leads, while still delivering a dynamic Oregon Dungeness experience to everyone passing by our booth.

BULLETIN BOARD MATERIAL

The ODCC was proud to, once again, share the delicious bounty of our product with legislators at the end of session Fish Fry, held at the [Willamette Heritage Center](#) (Mission Mill) in Salem.

This event provides a unique opportunity to meet face-to-face with policy makers on both sides of the aisle, and remind them just how good our product is - and how important it is to our coastal communities!



Happy 10th!! - "In 2009, fourth-graders from Sunset Primary School in West Linn helped make it happen."

This year marks the 10-year anniversary of our Oregon Dungeness Crab becoming the official State Crustacean!

In 2009, fourth-graders from Sunset Primary School in West Linn helped make it happen.

The students were studying the states, and learned that Maryland and Louisiana both had state crustaceans. That, ultimately, led to the proclamation in Salem on June 19th, 2009!



OREGON DUNGENESS
CRAB COMMISSION

JOHN CORBIN/ASTORIA

CRYSTAL ADAMS/
CHARLESTON (Processor Rep)

JOHN MOODY/NEWPORT
(Processor Rep)

MIKE RETHERFORD/
NEWPORT

TYLER LONG/CHARLESTON

BRIAN NOLTE/BROOKINGS

RICK LILIENTHAL/
CHARLESTON

LEIF ERIC BENSON/PUBLIC
MEMBER

A FOND FAREWELL TO SHIRLEY WILLIAMS

A fixture at the ODCC steps down:

After 22 years of dedicated service as our Office Manager, Shirley Williams retired at the end of June. She was responsible for keeping the office's engine running smoothly, and for keeping Hugh and Tim in line (not sure which was more challenging). We wish her the very best!



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OFFICEMANAGER@OREGONDUNGENESS.ORG

OREGON DUNGENESS CRAB
COMMISSION

964 Central Avenue
P.O. Box 1160
Coos Bay, Oregon 97420

Phone: (541) 267-5810

Fax: (541) 267-5772

E-mail:

officemanager@oregondungeness.org

