

NEWS RELEASE

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Commercial Dungeness crab season delayed

NEWPORT, Ore. – The traditional Dec. 1 opening of the commercial Dungeness crab season will be delayed until at least Dec. 16 along the entire Oregon coast as testing shows crabs are too low in meat yield.

The ocean commercial Dungeness crab season in Oregon is targeted to open Dec. 1, but can be delayed to ensure a high-quality product to consumers and avoid wastage of the resource. Crab quality testing in early November showed that the majority of test areas did not meet the criteria for a Dec. 1 opening. The delayed opening will allow for crab to fill with more meat.

A second round of crab quality testing will occur in late November or early December, and the results will be used to determine if the season should open Dec. 16, be further delayed, or be split into areas with different opening dates.

Due to elevated levels of domoic acid, crab closures are currently in effect from Cape Blanco to the California border. This closure applies to both recreationally and commercially harvested crab from bays and estuaries, and on beaches, docks, piers, and jetties. Recreational crab harvesting outside of these areas remains open in bays and estuaries, and on beaches, docks, piers, and jetties.

In conjunction with the delayed ocean commercial season, commercial harvest of Dungeness crab in Oregon bays that are currently open will close at 12:01 a.m. Dec. 1, but may reopen if the ocean commercial fishery opens in December. Recreational harvest of Dungeness crab in the ocean off Oregon will open Dec. 1 as scheduled in areas where there are no Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) health advisories.

Find the latest information on closures by calling the ODA shellfish safety information hotline at (800) 448-2474 or visiting the ODA shellfish closures web page at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/FoodSafety/Shellfish/Pages/ShellfishClosures.aspx>

Crab and shellfish products sold in retail markets and restaurants remain safe for consumers. The closure in the health advisory area ensures safety and the delay in the commercial ocean season promotes a high quality product.

Commercial Dungeness crab is Oregon's most valuable fishery. Last year's season opening was also delayed but still brought in the highest ex-vessel value ever (\$74 million) with 23.1 million pounds landed, about 31 percent above the 10-year average.