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Contact: Hugh Link (541)267-5810
Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission
hugh@oregondungeness.org
www.oregondungeness.org

“COMMISSION VOTES TO FUND VITAL WHALE STUDY”

Coos Bay, OR – “This shows, once again, how seriously our fishermen take the issue of whale entanglements,” ODCC Executive Director Hugh Link said. “This is a project that will help lead us to the next important steps in the process.”

Link was referring to the results of a special meeting of the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, where the board voted unanimously to fund the first year of a study designed to help prevent incidents of whale entanglement off the Oregon coast.

The ODFW, US Coast Guard, Oregon Sea Grant and Oregon State University Marine Mammal Ecologist Dr. Leigh Torres are partnering on a project to better understand whale distribution and overlap with fishing effort to reduce entanglement risk in Oregon. “It is our belief that this project will help fill-in critical gaps in our working knowledge of whales off Oregon,” Link said.

“This study will help our industry by providing important baseline information about the distribution and population structure of whales off Oregon. It will also help to inform the management making decisions by evaluating the co-occurrence of whales with fixed-gear fishing effort to ultimately identify areas and times of high/low whale entanglement risk.”

The commission voted, unanimously, to approve up to \$45,000 to fund the first year of the study, in order to get the project underway as soon as possible. The board also voted to write a letter in support of Federal grant funding for the next two years of the project.

If anyone has any questions, please contact ODCC Executive Director Hugh Link or Leigh Torres at Leigh.torres@oregonstate.edu.

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The ODCC is an industry-funded commodity commission under the umbrella of the Oregon Department of Agriculture, representing 423 limited-entry Oregon crab permit holders in a “well managed and sustainably harvested fishery.” Our mission is to enhance the image of Oregon’s Dungeness crab industry and increase opportunities for profitability through promotion, education and research.