

NEWS RELEASE

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
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Oregon commercial Dungeness crab industry leading on reducing risks to whales

NEWPORT, Ore – ODFW is asking commercial Dungeness crab industry representatives to help design the next steps in reducing risk of whale and sea turtle entanglements in crab fishing gear. ODFW is hosting virtual public meetings Oct. 8 and Oct. 22 to further develop the draft conservation plan describing Oregon's actions to support both this culturally iconic fishery and reduce entanglements.

At these meetings, ODFW will describe the [newly adopted regulations to address whale entanglement](#) that will be in place for the upcoming commercial crab season starting Dec. 1. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted these rules at their Sept. 11 meeting in addition to rules which better align ODFW's crab biotoxin rules with those of the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Whale entanglements have increased since a marine heatwave began in 2014 and are particularly evident in federally listed humpback whales which forage in Oregon waters during the warmer months (April – November). Oregon gear has been confirmed on entangled whales observed as far south as Mexico and as far north as Washington. While reports of whale entanglements are likely rising in part due to public awareness, research is demonstrating the biggest factor may be changing ocean conditions which altered where and when whales migrate and feed.

ODFW's Dr. Caren Braby is leading the agency's effort to find creative ways to support the fishery and address critical conservation issues over the long-term.

"It's important to balance our stewardship responsibilities for both the recovering humpback whale populations and Oregon's iconic Dungeness crab fishery," Braby said. "Our goal is for the two to co-exist and thrive."

Industry members are playing a pivotal role in recommendations and best management practices generated by the Oregon Whale Entanglement Working Group. Led by Oregon Sea Grant, the Working Group included industry, environmental groups, marine mammal experts, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The Working Group meetings led to the beginning of a research project to fill the critical information gap on where and when whales are feeding in Oregon waters. Oregon State University's Dr. Leigh Torres leads the project funded by the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission and NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Oregon Sea Grant, ODFW and the U.S. Coast Guard partner in this important project.

The adaptive management approach of the conservation plan will be the focus of the Oct. 8 and Oct. 22 meetings which run 1-4 pm. For agenda items, visit the [commercial Dungeness crab industry notice](#).

Oct. 8:

- Join online: <https://pdx.zoom.us/j/97399469567?pwd=NTErU0l1Tkhl1SHJyNXlFbFcyYXVxQT09>
 - Passcode: 832591

- Or join by phone: 1-971-247-1195
 - Webinar ID: 973 9946 9567
 - Passcode: 832591

Oct. 22:

- Join online: <https://pdx.zoom.us/j/94727292811?pwd=SzBMS1djd0tsZ1pJb01iOEISWjdHQT09>
 - Passcode: 207856
- Or join by phone: 1-971-247-1195
 - Webinar ID: 947 2729 2811
 - Passcode: 207856

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