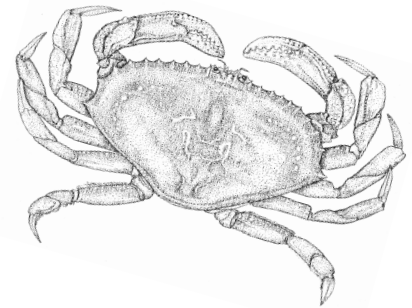


## **Commercial Crabber/Towboat Lane Agreement Meeting**

Friday, November 13, 2015  
Port of Astoria Commissioners' Meeting Room  
Astoria, Oregon.

### **Meeting Summary**

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### **Opening Remarks and Introductions**

Following introductions of those in attendance representing west coast commercial fishing, tug and barge, and international shipping industries, along with Oregon Dungeness crab management staff, Steve Harbell, Washington Sea Grant, briefly reviewed discussions during the March meeting and activities since that time.

### **15-16 Season Review/Compliance Issues**

#### **Tug and Barge Traffic**

Pete Nelson, Dunlap Towing, indicated that his company will be involved in more of the same traffic this coming season. A number of wood chip loads from Coos Bay to the Columbia River are scheduled for the next several months. Toby Jacobson, Foss Maritime, reported that they also expect similar traffic this coming year. As a result of discussions during the March meeting, Steve contacted Island Towing and provided them with updated information on the current towlanes. The final three pontoons were towed out of Grays Harbor earlier this year, so that will not be a factor in tug and barge traffic out of Grays Harbor. Pete indicated that Brusco Towing will continue trips between Aberdeen and the Columbia River.

#### **Shipping Traffic**

Dan Jordan, Columbia River Bar Pilots Association, reported that Vigor Industrial has begun operation of their 960 foot dry dock in Portland, the largest in the U.S. This will mean additional ship traffic in the Columbia River. The \$50 million dry dock will allow Vigor to service vessels such as cruise ships, tankers, and cargo ships. Toby Jacobson, Foss Maritime, indicated that ships may be towed to the facility for repairs.

## **Commercial Fishing**

Commercial crab industry representatives and Jill Smith, Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, discussed a number of factors affecting the opening of the crab season. In Washington, test fishery results were good for shell condition and pick out percentage, but nearshore samples showed low levels of domoic acid. In addition, Willapa Bay is currently closed due to higher levels of domoic acid, so additional tests are underway for crab harvested in 6 fathoms to determine if any issues might arise with this marine bio-toxin.

In Oregon, Jill indicated that test fishery results for pick out percentage were very good at 26% or higher, but that domoic acid continues to be a concern, particularly in southern Oregon. Levels there of 45 ppm required further testing by the Dept. of Agriculture that are still underway. Depending on the outcome, a proposed requirement for eviscerating crab during processing might be instituted in certain locations, affecting marketing and ex-vessel prices. In California, the early San Francisco fishery remains closed due to domoic acid, and additional testing has shown high levels in northern California as well. All of this uncertainty makes it difficult to predict when the coastwide Dungeness crab fishery will open.

Jill also reported that the final marine reserve fishing restrictions off Cape Falcon will be in effect as of January 1<sup>st</sup>.

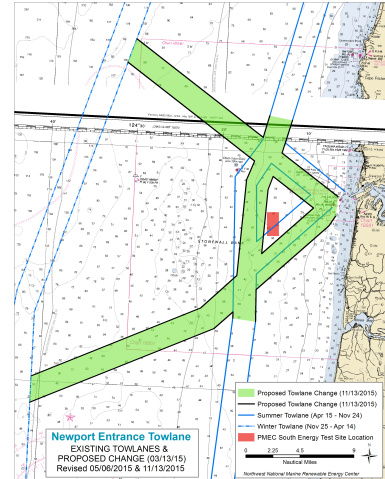
## **Proposed Changes in Towlanes/Open Fishing Areas**

### **Newport Lane Change**

Dan Hellin, Oregon State University, provided an update on the Northwest National Marine Renewable Energy South Ocean Energy Test Site. Although tug and barge traffic into and out of Newport, Oregon in the past has been minimal, recent port development may lead to increased traffic in the future. In addition, a recent process related to ocean energy development has established a portion of an ocean energy test site in the existing southern entrance lane. Dan explained that this Newport ocean energy test site is one of two being considered by the federal Dept. of Energy, and it's proximity to a deep-water port and other factors give it some advantages over the mid-California site in Santa Barbara County supported by Cal Poly. Pete Nelson asked if the Newport site would ever be used, and Dan indicated that DOE would make a decision on which site to support.

At the March meeting, Dan provided a proposal for altering the current lanes into Newport. For the lane connection to the winter lane, Pete Nelson and Jeff Hill expressed concern about running the lane over the Stonewall Banks area, which is extremely shallow given their operational needs. Scott McMullen also indicated that the sea buoy area off Newport now includes several Ocean Observatory Initiatives buoys, which should be avoided. The group suggested extending the summer connecting lanes both north and south, providing a connection to the winter towlane. For the southern lane, this would roughly follow the 17 degree line on Dan's chart.

Following that meeting, Dan developed a new lane proposal for review following these recommendations. However, there were concerns expressed by tug and barge industry representatives that the narrow one-mile lanes could cause problems. As a result, Dan modified the proposal to widen the lanes to two nautical miles. Pete Nelson, Dunlap Towing indicated that this new proposal was acceptable, and Dan will get final approval from Jeff Hill, Sause Brothers Towing in Coos Bay. Bob Eder, Newport Crab Association also indicated that this new proposal was acceptable, and Dan will present this revised lane configuration to the Fishermen Involved in Natural Energy (FINE) group in Newport. In the absence of any concerns, this new lane configuration may be instituted at a future date, and this new version will be posted on the Washington Sea Grant website for further review and comment.



### **Washington Permanent Lane Off the Columbia River**

Dale Beasley, Columbia River Crab Fishermen's Association, described his preference for a single year-round lane running south out of the Columbia River. He acknowledged that this would be difficult to connect to both the summer and winter lanes near Tillamook. Pete Nelson, Dunlap Towing, also expressed his support for a single lane that was part of his earlier proposal, but also had concerns about the connection to southern lanes. Commercial fishermen on the central Oregon coast earlier expressed their support for maintaining the current lane location, so those lanes off Garibaldi and Newport will not be changed. This makes it difficult to implement a single year-round lane from the Columbia River. John Corbin, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, also expressed his support for a single year-round lane. The group discussed the advisory lanes that were established some years ago in response to greater numbers of pots being set in deep water of 100 fathoms or more. John indicated that this trend has continued, with pots now set at depths of 125 fathoms. Pete reported that he is operating when possible within the advisory lanes.

### **Point Reyes – San Francisco Traffic Lanes**

Pete Nelson reported that with changes in the vessel traffic lanes into San Francisco, the towboat lanes need to be modified to connect to these new points. Steve will work with Scott McMullen to develop a modified towlane chart for San Francisco which will be posted on the Washington Sea Grant website.

The group suggested improving access to information about the Crabber Towboat project on the new Washington Sea Grant (WSG) website. Currently it is difficult to find that information on the WSG homepage. The internet link to the project page is:

<https://wsg.washington.edu/community-outreach/outreach-detail-pages/crabbertowboat-lane-agreements>

Steve suggested using an internet search or Washington Sea Grant home page search for "Crabber Towboat Project." This takes you directly to the Crabber Towboat Project page.

### **Updated Versions of the Towlane Charts**

Steve indicated that the electronic versions of the charts have not been updated in over four years, and that after a long process, Washington Sea Grant has again contracted with Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee to complete that process. This includes a number of new software formats including Coastal Explorer (Rose Point) and updated pdf chartlet versions of the charts that will be easier to read. Scott gave a presentation on the new software formats (PC Windplot, Nobeltec/Olex, Coastal Explorer, Rosepoint, and Maptech) and products. He will be completing this process as soon as possible, and will provide thumb drives for distribution to industry members, as well as data files to post on the Washington Sea Grant website.

Toby Jacobson also requested that project information be included in Notice to Mariners, and Steve will again make sure that is done for the coming season.

### **Marine Weather Forecasting**

Tyree Wilde and Dave Elson, National Weather Service, Portland Office, gave an update on marine weather forecasting improvements and asked the group for feedback on various weather related products.

Tyree indicated that ocean buoys off the coast were all serviced this year and are doing well. Thanks in part to industry support by the Columbia River Bar Pilots Association and Columbia River Crab Fishermen's Association, the Coastal Storms Buoy 46089, 75 miles off Seaside, Oregon, is now part of the NOAA Ocean Buoy Program, with full funding for operations and support. The old buoy was replaced with a new one this year. Tyree provided the group with a written update sheet including these websites:

Marine weather:	<a href="http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/marine/barcams.php?site=2">http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/marine/barcams.php?site=2</a>
Tides:	<a href="http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/tides.php">http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/tides.php</a> <a href="http://tidesonline.nos.noaa.gov/geographic.html">http://tidesonline.nos.noaa.gov/geographic.html</a>
Webpages:	<a href="http://weather.gov/portland">weather.gov/portland</a> <a href="http://weather.gov/seattle">weather.gov/seattle</a> <a href="http://weather.gov/Medford">weather.gov/Medford</a>

Dave provided an update on the NWS designation for both wind and swell terminology in their forecast products. Pete suggested that with high swell, this should be indicated, which is currently being done. Dan Jordan, Columbia River Bar Pilots reported that the Scripps wave buoys measure swell and wind waves differently. He indicated that the Warnings and Watches portion of the NWS website was temporarily down.

The group also discussed bar closure policies, which include both industry and Coast Guard input. Dan Jordan indicated that the Bar Pilots are using a 20 foot seas, 50 knot wind level for suspending operations, and that the Coast Guard closure of the bar has not been a problem.

### **Coastal Marine Spatial Planning**

Dale Beasley expressed some optimism in recent acknowledgements by officials of the cost of ocean energy, including a revised plan at Camp Rilea to reduce ocean-based energy with land wind turbine systems, and a consideration for cost-benefit analysis in that overall site. He again expressed his concerns regarding the lack of emphasis on protecting existing sustainable uses. With a marine sanctuary, tribal fisheries, and economically important commercial and sport fisheries on the southern coast, Washington is a unique state in terms of further offshore development. Economic losses to the commercial fishing industry have already been substantial, and the ocean footprint for energy production equivalent to Bonneville Dam would create further losses. Nearly \$7 million in public funds has already been spent in Washington on ocean energy development, and recent efforts at mapping fishing activities have been problematic.

### **Other**

Steve announced his plans to retire in January and thanked the group for their success in working well together not only on crabber, towboat, and shipping issues, but a variety of other areas of mutual interest. He indicated that Kevin Decker, Washington Sea Grant, would be taking the lead in the project after his retirement.

**Meeting Adjourned 11:50**

**Next meeting - Friday, March 11, 2016**

**Port of Astoria Commissioners Room, 10 AM**

**Steve Harbell, Washington Sea Grant**

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