Crabber-Towboat Lane Agreement Biannual Meeting Minutes

November 3rd, 2023
10:00 am – 12:30 pm
Virtual
wsg.washington.edu/crabber-towboat

Next Meeting: Friday, March 15th, 2024

Attached Documents:

- ODFW 2022-2023 Post Season Dungeness Crab Update
- National Weather Service Marine Update
- BOEM West Coast Wind Development Activity Update

Partner Updates & Towlane Discussion:

Updates from Jenna Keeton with WSG: since our last biannual meeting, we've received an email from a barge captain and several sailors regarding the status of the towlanes. WSG also received a note from a CA fishermen who is worried about potential wind energy traffic and the possibility of moving the lane 1 mile due to the increased traffic. The group shared concerns with major implications or potential increased traffic due to wind energy.

Commercial Dungeness Crab 2022-2023 post-season updates:

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Matt George, Matthew.George@dfw.wa.gov, Jamie Fuller, Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov

The 2022-2023 coastal Dungeness Crab season produced a record 28.7 million pounds landed, state and tribal combined. However, the price of crab and its value was down from last year, with an ex-vessel value of $64.6 million for the state fishery. WDFW is conducting preseason testing with the hopes of a Dec 1 start date to the crabbing season. There is potential for a delayed upcoming season due to meat percentages. Test percentages range from 17 - 19 percent and WDFW staff are waiting for it to rise to 23% before opening the fishery. Testing is in Long Beach and Westport areas, not north of Destruction Island. There was group concern about not testing in the north coast region. The state fishery cannot open before Jan 15 for above Destruction Island per state-tribal agreements, so the northern test is not one that is beneficial for determining the opening of the state fishery. Electronic monitoring for vessels is required Jan 1st. Units are being shipped this next week for those who applied for the units.

Q1: Do razor clams have a correlation to domoic acid in crab?
A1: Yes, there seems to be a correlation. Currently, low domoic acid levels in razor clams on the tested beaches, so there is little concern for domoic acid in crab right now.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jill Smith, Jill.M.SMITH@odfw.oregon.gov

See presentation for more details
The 2022-2023 was an astonishing season in pounds, yet the price was low. Derelict gear program: about 95% of the crab pots recovered were in good or better reusable condition. This program will keep moving forward. Preseason crab testing will begin in the new week, weather may impact the testing results. Nov 27 and Dec 11 are the next test dates. Changes in regulations: restrictions of May 1st inside the 40fa line, gear at the surface 36ft - check the presentation for specific requirements, call the Oregon State Police if violations are spotted. Suggest calling ODFW for any further questions. Additionally, razor clams are closed from Cape Blanco Oregon to California boarder. Complicates things for Oregon.

Q2: What prompts a domoic acid test?
A2: Routine test will be conducted and if there is an acid issue, boats will be sent out for further testing.

California: Dungeness crab season may be delayed due to whale entanglement risk.

WSG towlane outreach poster

A need has been identified for more education on the location and use of the towlanes. WSG has shared the purpose and information on the upcoming flyer. Asking for any photos for flyer (fouled props). Areas to be avoided and any other informational for education of mariners.

Q3: Is there a link on WSG website for identifying the towlanes.
A3: Yes, it is on the WSG site.

USCG offered to share the flyer on their Local Notice to Mariners that comes out once a week. The flyer will include the link and QR codes. Information will be sent to marinas and local businesses, via email and text list servers as well as through fishing associations, social media, fishermen and family groups, safety and information training. Send ideas and suggestions for getting the information out to WSG.

Marine Weather Update, NOAA National Marine Weather Service
Matthew Cullen, matthew.cullen@noaa.gov
See presentation for more details

Fall season approaches with active weather - buoy 5 is out of service and is due to be fixed this month. Buoy 87 (west entrance Strait of Juan de Fuca) wave data remains out, no scheduled service at this time. For Seattle NWS Office: coastal waters forecast was issued at 3am, 9am, 3pm, 9pm, now only routinely at 3am/3pm as of Oct 1 - but updates still made as necessary in between. This matches the Portland, OR NWS office update cycle.

Pacific Port Access Route Study Update, U.S. Coast Guard

John Moriarty, John.F.Moriarty@uscg.mil

The USCG Navigation office has submitted fairway proposals to the USCG regulatory office and now USCG is waiting on moving forward to regulation, funding dependent. Some discussion about the fairway zones.

Offshore Wind Activity Update, Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management

Carlos Gomez, Juan.Gomez@boem.gov

See presentation for more details

BOEM manages the development of the outer shelf from 3 - 200 miles offshore. Please refer to the presentation for the processes and timing of the four stages for development of projects. California: 5 leases have been granted in California - red box on slide 5 in presentation. Slide 6 has a map and charts for the areas and the companies that provided bids. Oregon: early in the planning stages and working with stakeholders as well as draft wind areas. New step introduced in Oregon - Draft Wind Energy Area - No overlap or conflict in northern California and Oregon for proposed wind areas. Refer to slide 12 for the most suitable area for wind energy projects.

Q4: Wind area A - how did you arrive or come up with the megawatts available for these areas?

A4: Based upon estimate from National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) which has a formula for the energy production per unit area.

Q5: With larger turbines the concern is about the anchor spread with such a large turbine.

A5: Data calculations and information will be sent to Jenna and sent out to members.

Q6: Does the projected output relate to plate capacity or some other calculations.

A6: Many different factors but they are on the conservative side.

Comment 1: Plate capacity and turbine capacity are not usually the same.

Q7: Are there any wind development activities in Washington? A7: No.

Comment 2: BOEM may be collecting information but concern that responses are missing. More data and reporting may be required that is not being done or that there are some data gaps. Suggest the need for more time to make sure there is more analysis.

A: Thanks to the public, comment period just closed, BOEM agrees that more environment analysis needs to be done and funding of studies is ongoing.

Comment 3: the need to understand upwelling effects on ecosystems before next steps are taken. Tribes are voicing concerns to have conversations with BOEM and the potential effects of wind energy.

Q8: How does wind energy process account for projected shift in fish stocks such as groundfish fleet?

A8: Latest data and users are involved, and data used when it is available - Planning and coordinating is done in coordination and collaboration between BOEM and NOAA all the time.

Q9: WSG to group: Can you navigate those areas illustrated by the draft WEAs?

A9: There are a lot of unknowns for wind turbines in these water depths. There is not a floating mooring more than 100 meters. Have to look at what is possible and since they are unique then the cables between the platforms and between the substation cannot go to the bottom and will be hung in the water column. May preclude transiting between them.

Comment 4: Already have some experience with what's required if you look at the platform system in Gulf of Mexico. Restricted areas around certain platforms particularly in deep waters and transiting the Hood Canal bridge with the cables can be an exciting transit to make sure you're clearing those cables. Always a difference between design and what really happens.

Comment 5: No legal effect for exclusion of any activities around turbines, but in practical effect there will be excluded activities. Fishing activities that would not be able to occur on those areas. Longline or pot fisheries, trawl fisheries. Also, navigating through turbine arrays, only transit, there is evidence that there is a notable interference in radar efficiency, so it's fine if you can see them but otherwise, might be a safety concern.

Site information and references:
https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/california
https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/Oregon
https://www.regulations.gov: BOEM-2022-0009 and BOEM-2023-0033