



Crabber-Towboat Lane Agreement Biannual Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 15th, 2024, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Englund Marine, Astoria and Zoom

wsg.washington.edu/crabber-towboat

Next hybrid meeting date: Friday, November 1st 10:00am

Attached documents:

- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Dungeness Crab Fishery Update
- California Department of Fish and Game Dungeness Crab Fishery Update
- National Weather Service (NWS) Marine Update
- BOEM Mailing List Instructions
- BOEM Web Page - CA Lessee Communications Plans and Progress Reports

Attendees

Jenna Keeton, Robert Maw, Brandi O'Reagan, Matt George, Ellie Brower, Troy Wakefield, Jennifer Haggen, Jeff Ferguson, Treena Jensen, Tim Tees, Aaron Dijkstra, Steve Benschuef, Peter Jay, Dan Nutt, Nick Preston, Junior Goodall, Jen Miller, John Larsen, Peter Chiller, Haley Kennard, Ann Skelton, Scott McMullen, Jill Smith, Ellie Brauer, Mike Rudolph, Chris German, Amanda Gladics, Steve Ackerman, Ann Skelton, Matthew Cullen, Samantha Borth

Partner Updates & Towlane Discussion

WSG: Two incidents were reported and we have contacts in place for sharing.

Jill Smith: Article in the Astorian - do we have any updates about getting an important buoy fixed? USCG - Heavy lift vessel did not get to buoy, USCG vessel will be back on route to fix within the next 2-4 weeks. Vessel coming out of CA, only two boats on the west coast to service buoys. Q: Regarding Buoy 29: What makes them go out? A: Vessel strikes, electronics in salt water. Buoy getting a new hull. Buoy 29 has a communication issue. Buoy 89 has a Mooring issue which will require a longer service time. Q: Can the outer buoys get fixed due to weather issues? A: They are a priority for tugs. Buoy 2 - will be fixed in September. Buoy 15 was struck by a vessel and has damage - will be fixed in September. Grant from Oregon applied to get three more weather buoys - support with letters.

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Troy Wakefield: Proposed change to lanes in the Crescent City area asking it to be moved further south a mile to a mile and a half. Sea Grant will work with Troy and other users to get the coordinates and user groups. Prawn industry is concerned that this is a critical area for this fishery especially if there is an increased traffic

Haley Kennard, Tug Escort Environmental Analysis Coordinator, WA Dept. of Ecology Spills Program. Working with the Board of Pilotage - Puget Sound rule making and possibly increase the number of tug escorts in the Puget Sound area. Haley.Kennard@ecy.wa.gov | (564) 233-5178

Chris German: Pac-PARS no update, slow process. Buoys are expensive, and there's been an increase in Olympic traffic sanctuary area to be avoided- it is voluntary but more traffic going through the area.

Jennifer Miller (BOEM) offshore wind update: In CA there are five active leases and communication plans are being constructed - fisheries, tribal. The communications plans and progress reports will be published to BOEM's website as well as environmental impact due late 2025. OR published an EID area as well as a notice of intent for an environmental impact. Next steps draft and sales notice as well as procedures. Planning an auction in 2024 for an area off Oregon.

Questions:

- No plan for impact with the survey and buoys, no extending of comments for notice of intent
- Letters from Oregon gov were sent and were they ignored? Letters received and the requested paused was done and work have been done with the State and Gov has supported the plan, coastal representatives are involved
- Are you familiar with gridworks? Yes and study efforts are underway - this is a state of Washington project and they are the source for more information.
- At what point does mitigation get discussed? Can happen at various stages. No plans or projects during the lease offering due to the need for the leases to collect that data for the specific sites. Specifically economic harm - it will be looked at each stage. Mitigation will be done during the survey, communication groups and plans are important.
- For communication purposes sign up for the constant contact for BOEM
- Good job to BOEM for recognizing the outer tow lanes as well as the USCG meetings for pac-pars

Jennifer Hagen: regarding north coast buoys, see <https://spotter.sofaroccean.com> and <https://nvs.nanoos.org/Explorer>. NANOOS sensors are out and potentially in the lanes.

Proposed Change to Meeting Name

We discussed a potential name change, & purpose of the group and disclosed a new email address for folks to use: towlanes@uw.edu. Possible names could be "West Coast Obstructions & Navigation " or "West coast safe transit corridors or passageway" to better account for what this group discusses. There needs to be more awareness of scientific

equipment moorings in the middle of towlanes. The historic towlane agreement was based on the nature of wire towing + crab/longline fishing gear entanglements. How to mitigate pleasure boat lane vs. tug traffic – don't want to funnel all traffic into towlane. USCG highlighted Unintended consequences of all vessels transiting in towlane. Some opposed the name change. There has been a decline in attendance in crab/tug industries. Tugs still have issues with getting crab pots in lanes while some tuggers do not have issues with crabbers especially with AIS. Kirby Offshore Marine 24-hour dispatch 713-435-1330 (Houston)

Commercial D. Crab Post-Season Updates

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: 2023/2024 season has highest catch ever recorded 96% more than average 10 years. This year - late start Feb 1 - pot reduction this year but running it more frequently. About half as many crab last year were caught and gear impacts are still happening. Electronic monitoring systems need to be working at all times when vessels are fishing . All updates for Washington regarding the 22/23 commercial crab season and EM requirements for the 23/24 season can be found in our newsletter: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/newsletter-dungeness-crab-fishery-2023-24.pdf>

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (see powerpoint):

There were no demolic acid issues this year for crab. Clams are closed mid coast and south. This season is currently the third highest value but could go to the second largest. There has been a shift in boat - CA boats coming up to fish. A fire in Ilwaco was an issue. May 1st - 20% reduction, inside 40 fa 36 feet surface gear. August 14 closure date. Derelict gear and registration 2 weeks after the closure - register and then apply to keep the gear. E-log books looking to be implemented next season with 100% participation ASAP, option to do electronic or paper for the first few years. E-log books are becoming more positive. Comment - thanks for the adjustment for OR and WA to help with the gear loss. 36ft requirement summer only? no information

California Department of Fish and Game (see powerpoint):

Crabbing opened Jan 5 north, Jan 15 for central with reduction

Marine Weather Update - NWS (see powerpoint):

The National Weather Service knows there are outages and understands the concern. Scheduled services. Dial a buoy service is terminated as of Mid March. New verbiage on the forecast plus addition of wave details. More detailed land forecast zones, no changes to the marine forecast zones

Educational Poster & Flier

WSG has an updated plan to educate crab and tug fleets about the towlanes using a postcard, flyer, poster. We will share out the media ahead of the November meeting. This will give us dedicated material at Fish Expo, and the Boat Show. Request for information and numbers for companies . Request for this group to preview media