



## Crabber/Towboat Lane Meeting Minutes

November 12, 2021, 10:00 – 11:30 (virtual)

[wsg.washington.edu/crabber-towboat](http://wsg.washington.edu/crabber-towboat)

### In attendance:

- Lieutenant Commander Joe Anthony, USCG
- Dan Ayres, WDFW
- Dale Beasley, Crabber, Westport
- Kelly Corbett, Oregon Dept Fish and Wildlife
- Kevin Decker, Washington Sea Grant
- Bob Edder, Crabber, Newport
- Patrick Gallagher, Marine Exchange of Puget Sound
- Amanda Gladics, Oregon Sea Grant
- Jennifer Hagen, Quileute Tribe
- Commander Brendan Harris, USCG
- Jeff Hill, Sass Brothers Tug Operations
- Will Jasper, Makah Tribe
- Treena Jensen, National Weather Service
- Daniel Joram, Nobletec
- Jenna Keeton, Washington Sea Grant
- Sean Macduff, Washington Sea Grant
- Nick Preston, Sass Brothers, Port Captain
- Jon Venture, Marine Exchange, Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee

### *Action items in red*

### Partner Updates:

#### Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Dan Ayres

##### *Washington Dungeness Crab Season, 2020-21:*

The 2020-21 season ended on 9/15/2021. The value of the fishery this year was “Good”. This season produced the highest value on record with a total value of \$52.4 million ex-vessel value. The landings of the fishery this year was “Moderate”. The state landed just over 10 million pounds. Including the tribal catch brings the total state landings up to 12.6 million pounds. The previous season that was closest to this year was 2016. The opening of the 2020-21 season was tumultuous, citing issues with domoic acid. However, despite the delayed opening date, crab fishermen did a good job of catching up and the season was deemed good overall. WDFW is currently test-



fishing near the Port of Chinook and Long Beach area for the 2021-22 season. The official opening date for 2021-22 season is slated for 12/1/2021. The opening date has been delayed in past seasons, however the crab meat content and domoic acid levels this year seem to be on track for a timely opener and there is a chance the fishery could open on 12/1/2021. Additionally, test fishing is occurring out of Westport and crab are looking good with above minimum meat content. This fishery is delayed due to State-Tribal treaty negotiations and there is no opening date set yet in this area.

*Derelict Gear Program:*

Lost/derelict gear may now be recovered beginning on May 1. Pots fished after this time must have a summer tag on board. This year 807 pots were recovered and 777 of those were recovered early in the season; most derelict gear was out of water during the critical time when humpback whales are in the area.

*Electronic Monitoring:*

WDFW is testing an electronic monitoring system funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. They have completed Phase 1 (4 boats) using software to track vessel location data in real-time to understand where crab gear is being fished. Phase 2 will include testing the system on 12 boats. The motivation behind this effort is to better understand where crab pots are and relate that to where whales are present and where they may be headed to reduce potential entanglement. The data would also highlight whether gear is being fished over tribal boundaries or in shipping lanes. Additionally, this data could provide WDFW with a better understanding of the location of current gear in case domoic acid levels cause a closure in certain areas. If successful, this electronic monitoring system could replace the current outdated paper logbook system.

**Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Kelly Corbett**

*Oregon Dungeness Crab Season, 2020-21*

The 2020-21 Dungeness Crab season was similar to Washington's and the opening was delayed coastwide in Round 1 of preseason testing due to low meat quality. Criteria was met during testing in Round 2 in all areas. Fishing opened south of Cape Falcon on 12/16/2020. Most of the fleet waited for industry price negotiations for another 3 weeks so crabbing didn't get started for the majority of coast until 1/8/2021. The area north of Cape Falcon coordinated the crab opening with southern Washington area and crabbing was delayed until 2/16/2021.

Once the season was completely open, crabbing occurred through 8/14/2021 per regulation. Coastwide, 12.2 million pounds were landed which is 29% below the 10-year average (17 million pounds). The ex-vessel value was \$60.6 million ex vessel value. The 2020-21 season was the 5<sup>th</sup> highest grossing season on record. The high price was the main driver for setting a record this past season. The highest ever ex-vessel value



was recorded in a single month (May, \$9.50/pound) and across the season the price was \$4.97/pound. This season produced the highest price ever seen. Pre-season testing for domoic acid and meat quality is currently underway for the 2021-22 season and no results are back yet.

### *Derelict Gear Program*

Pots may be recovered starting 2 weeks after the end of the season which is around the end of August through mid-October. This year around 500 pots were recovered. There was very low participation in recovering pots on south coast, and far less participation than normal on north coast. 2021 was the first season of risk reduction measures for minimizing risk of marine life entanglement. ODFW instated a 20% gear reduction and 40-fathom depth restriction on 5/1/2021 and this restriction will also be in place next season and then re-evaluated by Fish and Wildlife Commission

Coordinates and map of 40 fathom depth restriction:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/data/depth-based-boundary-lines-west-coast>

[https://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/docs/2021/40fm\\_HarvestAreas\\_ALL.pdf](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/commercial/crab/docs/2021/40fm_HarvestAreas_ALL.pdf)

### **NOAA, National Weather Service, Treena Jensen**

#### *Marine Weather Updates (presentation attached)*

NWS and Scripps buoy updates were presented. Treena presented a review of parameters of last winter's La Nina season including sustained wind speed (Buoy #29 Columbia River, Buoy #50 Newport). NWS will increase the number of dense fog advisories over nearshore waters during the fall and winter months.

NWS Portland Marine Links – One Stop Shop <https://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/marine.php>

Marine Quick Look [https://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/quicklook\\_marine.php](https://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/quicklook_marine.php)

Coastal Marine Forecast Charts [https://www.weather.gov/pqr/marine\\_histogram](https://www.weather.gov/pqr/marine_histogram)

Beach Hazard Safety Resources <https://www.weather.gov/safety/beachhazards>

Cold Water Safety Resources <https://www.weather.gov/safety/coldwater>

Audience comments:

- Beach Hazard Warnings are very helpful.
- A new buoy will be placed near La Push.
- Buoy 29, 50 checked often by commercial fishermen. *There is a desire to get more information for swells.* Perhaps NWS could trade the 10-minute wind report for 10-minute swell report between November and May.



## U.S. Coast Guard, Commander Brendan Harris

The USCG shared information regarding the Pacific Coast Port Access Route Study (*presentation, pamphlet, and flyer attached*) being conducted between District 11 and 13. The objective of this study is to codify vessel routing measures in federal regulation that are along coastal and offshore regions from Mexican border to Strait of Juan de Fuca. The Port Access Route Study is led by USCG and incorporates analyses to justify any action to establish new or adjust current fairways and/or traffic separation schemes. There is a *public comment period* that began in summer 2021 and *runs through 1/25/2022* to house comments by all waterway users, with a particular focus on study areas.

## Partner Updates

- Question: How will fishing vessel traffic be affected by offshore wind energy proposals? The Pacific Fisheries Management Council created an ad hoc Marine Spatial Planning Committee which is discussing the above issues at their next council meeting in November 2021.
- All the Oregon Marine Harvest Areas and Oregon Marine Preserve, with 40 fathom line are imported into Nobeltec software and is available for download and KML (<https://we.tl/t-dwuJVdXGmQ>). Nobeltec wants to get towboat lanes updated in their format for upload to the Washington Sea Grant website. *If any other changes to state regulatory areas that affects fishermen, (e.g., closures), Nobeltec wants to get that information to fishermen ASAP.*
- *Potential future discussion: crabbers fishing within tow lanes.*
- The Harbor Safety Committee created an ad-hoc subcommittee for anchorages, in the Rosario area and have a desire for towboat lanes to continue through this area.

**Next Meeting: Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 10:00 – 11:30**

Contact Jenna Keeton, Washington Sea Grant with questions or comments

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