

# Oregon Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishing Directive to Minimize Marine Life Entanglement Risk

Recommended by the Oregon Entanglement Advisory Committee  
Last updated November 2022



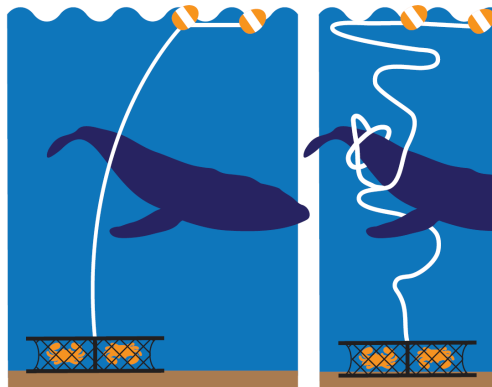
## Reasons for Directive

Since 2014, there has been an elevated number of marine life entanglements in fixed fishing gear, particularly in commercial Dungeness crab gear, along the U.S. West Coast. This increase has been driven largely by interactions with humpback whales, including animals that are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. This situation threatens the stability of the fishery and coastal fishing communities. These best practices are an important, proactive way that the Oregon crab fleet can help to reduce the risk of marine life entanglement and continue to harvest crab.

## Best practices during the crab season

The best known way to reduce risk of marine life entanglement is to **reduce the amount of gear** and line in the water during the spring and summer months, when threatened species are in the area. To that end, **remove any gear that you are not actively tending** during the season, ensure you are meeting the 14-day landing requirement, and promptly remove all gear from the water when finished crabbing for the season.

- Use the **minimum amount of scope** required to compensate for tides, currents, and weather.
- When moving pots to shallower water, shorten the length of pot lines by adjusting shots to **maintain taut vertical lines**.
- **Minimize surface gear** and ensure no excess line is floating at the surface. Floating line should only be between the main buoy and trailer buoy(s).
- **Minimize knots, splices, and leads** when connecting buoys and lines, especially in the upper portion of the gear.
- **Avoid setting gear in the vicinity of large feeding aggregations** of whales, especially humpback whales.
- **Communicate the locations of unusually high whale activity** to other fishermen and ODFW.
- Ensure **all gear markings are clearly legible**, as required by regulations, to help identify the origins of lost gear and gear involved in entanglements.
- **Promptly report entangled animals** to the NMFS entanglement response hotline and follow all NMFS reporting guidelines (*see back of Directive for more reporting information*).



**REMEMBER—**  
By regulation, it is unlawful to use crab gear with more line than is reasonably necessary to compensate for tides, currents, and weather.

## Best practices to reduce gear loss and recover derelict gear

- Maintain gear to ensure lines and buoys are in **good working condition**.
- **Remove any derelict gear** that you encounter during the season, consistent with applicable regulations.
- Participate in the **permitted post-season derelict gear program** by reporting gear and/or recovering gear after the season ends.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO DISCUSS APPLICABLE REGULATIONS, CONTACT ODFW AT (541)867-4741**



**Report entangled whales or sea turtles IMMEDIATELY to the NMFS entanglement response hotline at 1-877-SOS-WHALe (1-877-767-9425) or hail the U.S. Coast Guard on Channel 16. If possible, stand by.**

### Why report?

Prompt reporting is the best way to assist an entangled animal and is critical to facilitating response efforts, when appropriate. Thorough reporting can also provide key information on where, when, and how entanglements occur which is essential to prevent future entanglements.

### Safety first!

Whales in distress may act unpredictably. Keep a safe distance. Do not approach within 100 yards. Watch for lines in the water that may entangle your boat. For both whales and sea turtles, do not attempt disentanglement without training or authorization. Instead, observe the animal from a distance.

### Photographs & video

Try to get video or photos showing the animal and entangling gear, including:

**ANIMAL:** head; any part of the body where gear may be present; for whales, side view of dorsal fin (or hump) and tail flukes (especially if underside is raised).

**ENTANGLEMENT:** buoy(s); tags; lines on the body; trailing lines (including distance from the animal); netting, if present; any other gear or markings, if present.

### Respond promptly if contacted

If you are contacted about an animal entangled in your gear or an entanglement that you reported, please respond. You can help prevent future entanglements by providing as much information as possible about your fishing gear and practices.



**This Directive was adapted by the Oregon Entanglement Advisory Committee from recommendations originally developed by the Oregon Whale Entanglement Working Group.**

For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/MarineLifeEntanglement>