

The industry would like to propose the following plan to reduce the chance of whale entanglements off the Oregon Coast.

- Instate a temporary three year rule to be placed on Oregon commercial crabbers starting June 1st of each year to study the amount of vertical lines in the water
- Starting June 1st, all crab permit holders will be limited to 200 pots
- Starting June 1st and/or when the season moves to a 1,200 pound limit, all crab permit holders must attach a second pot tag that declares the summer fishery in effect
- If a pot does not have two tags after the second Monday in June, the gear can be picked up by any permitted vessel to be returned to the rightful owner
- The vessel that recovers the improperly tagged gear can keep any legal product in the gear
- Starting June 1st, all vessels are to fish inside of 50 fathoms
- Any gear outside of 50 fathoms after June 1st, without two tags can be picked up by any permitted vessel

This option would reduce the amount of gear in the water and prove that fewer lines are in the water during the whale migration. This would give the crabbers an incentive to work together and clear gear off the water.

At the start of the season, the industry as a whole deploys between 100,000 and 120,000 pots in the water. If the crab permit holders were limited to 200 pots after June 1st, this would reduce the amount of pots in the water to between 10,000 and 20,000 pots during the whale migration. This temporary three-year plan would give each entity time to study, practice and implement a solid plan of action for the future.

Purpose:

*To address the concerns surrounding the possibility of whale co-occurrence with crab gear during the summer fishery

*To create an accurate account of crab pots being fished in the summer fishery

*To provide a tool to help expedite a more timely removal of all gear not being actively fished during the summer fishery

This proposal is being suggested as a temporary rule for the collection of data that may be used to quantify the involvement of the Oregon summer fishery with the whale entanglement issue.

The proposal: On or before June 1st ODFW makes available to any Oregon crab permit holder a maximum of 200 (or 200, 250 and 300) easily identifiable bouy tags at \$1 each for the summer fishery. These tags are to be attached to the main bouy in conjunction with the original bouy tags for easy identification of actively fished pots. On the start of the summer fishery (second Monday in June) any pot without a summer fishery tag may be picked up by any permitted vessel for the purpose of cleaning the ocean and reducing the possibility of unintended whale entanglement, recorded in the crab log book as recovered, and returned to the rightful owner by word of mouth. Any legal crabs may be retained by the retrieving vessel. Also, it is proposed that on June 1st or the second Monday of June any crab gear outside of 50 fathoms will be considered lost, untended or derelict and may be recovered by any permitted vessel, logged as recovered, and returned to the rightful owner. Legal crab may be retained by the retrieving vessel.

This proposal is intended to last a maximum of three consecutive years (seasons) to be reviewed at that time for effectiveness of its original purpose.