



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S SECOND SENATE DISTRICT

SENATOR MIKE MCGUIRE

MEDIA  RELEASE

For Immediate Release: March 31, 2016

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Senator McGuire introduces bill to protect whales and keep ocean free of lost crab gear

Sacramento, CA – Senator Mike McGuire has introduced a first-of-its-kind bill that will protect California's beloved whale populations from dangerous entanglements in lost or abandoned crab fishing gear. The legislation was proactively initiated by the thousands of Californian's who fish Dungeness crab off of the California coast.

With this year's crab season finally getting underway after a historic delay, and fishermen heading back out to sea, it's more important than ever to launch this initiative.

Senate Bill 1287 – The Whale Protection & Crab Gear Retrieval Act – would create a regulatory program with incentives for fishermen to retrieve Dungeness crab fishing gear that would otherwise be lost in the ocean. It's estimated that hundreds of pots are lost every season and these pieces of gear could have hundreds of feet of rope attached to a locator buoy.

The lost gear has created marine debris and entanglement hazards for whales and has created challenges for both the salmon and crab fleets.

“Working with California’s hard working crabbers and our state’s environmental community, we’re advancing this needed legislation that will benefit the thousands of migratory whales that feed off our coast and the thousands of fishermen who make up the Golden State’s crab and salmon fleet,” Senator McGuire said. **“We’ve seen a record number of whale entanglements over the past few years and it’s crucial to get the lost gear out of the water and out of their way. This bill creates a simple solution to this problem, while at the same time supporting recommendations initiated by crab fishermen.”**

Crab fishermen have taken the lead on this issue and many are already taking part in pilot programs that collect lost crab gear. SB 1287 will create the statewide solution to the problem and has garnered support from crab fishing organizations and environmental advocates.

“California’s crab and salmon fishermen are the first to recognize the need to remove preventable marine debris, and in the best possible position to do so,” said Tim Sloane, Executive Director of the Pacific Coast

Federation of Fishermen’s Associations. “SB 1287 gives them the tools to carry out effective gear recovery that will keep our ocean ecosystem clean.”

Based on recommendations from the Dungeness Crab Task Force, SB 1287 will call on the Department of Fish and Wildlife to establish a retrieval program. Dungeness crab fishermen, who obtain a permit through this program, will retrieve old crab traps after the season has closed each year. The bill also establishes a fee to be paid by the fishing boat that lost the crab trap or abandoned the gear at sea. The creation of a self-perpetuating program to recover fishing gear is a necessary action of the commercial Dungeness crab fishing industry to continue operating as a responsible, sustainable fishery.

Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom said: “Our responsibilities – to act as good stewards of nature and our ocean heritage – is more important today than it has ever been. Our environment on land, in skies, and beneath oceans is delicately balanced, each bound to the health of the other. I commend the dedication of crab fishermen and Senator McGuire in their work to reduce ocean debris, protect of our ocean’s whale population, and preserve California’s natural heritage for generations to come.”

Dr. Jeff Boehm, executive director of The Marine Mammal Center based in Sausalito, CA, said: “We applaud the efforts of Senator McGuire to advance this important legislation that will protect whales and other marine wildlife by helping to keep our coastal waters free of fishing gear debris.”

“The Dungeness crab fishery is in the top tier of California’s commercial seafood catch and the entire industry has weathered a challenging few years, including the historic delay of this year’s Dungeness crab season,” Senator McGuire said. “This gear retrieval program will be a great step forward in cleaning up our oceans and making a safer environment for people and whales.”

SB 1287 is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Natural Resources Committee [on April 12.](#)

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