



“The CCCA is a non-profit commercial fishery trade association that is funded by crab fishermen, crab buyers and donations from local coastal community support businesses. Our members are a diverse group of Dungeness Crab Vessel boat and permit owners, hired skippers and crab buyers, wholesalers and processing entities.

The CCCA was formed after the devastating out-of-court settlement between the Center For Biological Diversity and the CDFW/Bonham. Our industry has banded together to preserve the \$70-\$100 million dollar per year commercial crab industry that pays the bills for thousands of families in our coastal communities. Without it, most of us simply could not afford to continue in commercial fishing. As you all know, Dungeness crab fishing is a model of sustainability, with both economic and cultural importance.

The terms for fishing in the settlement of CBD vs. Bonham are a gross over-reach of regulation that could easily result in a severely crippled crab fishery with unreasonable, ineffective and outrageously expensive gear modifications and constant closures that could all add up to a total fishery collapse.

It should be noted that our industry has been proactively addressing the whale interaction issue for years before the CBD lawsuit and has successfully mitigated it through voluntary measures and legislation that includes but are not limited to trap limits, gear modifications, the Whale Entanglement Working Group and the Lost Gear Retrieval Program. These measures have successfully reduced confirmed interactions in recent years between ESA listed humpback and blue whales and Dungeness crab gear to practically zero.

Recent studies suggest an exponential increase in the population of humpback whales that migrate along the West Coast. It is becoming abundantly clear that our fishery's minimal interaction with ESA listed whales is having no effect on their health or robustly growing populations. This is news that should be celebrated, not met with draconian and unnecessary fishing restrictions.

As a member of the Whale Working Group I have been an active participant in the risk assessment process for our upcoming 2019-20 season. The other 12 industry members of the WWG who are also members of CCCA were concerned when Director Bonham did not follow the finding of low risk that was determined by the full group, including CDFW's own science team and the marine mammal experts from NOAA, and instead chose to delay the opening of our season based on concerns of the minority NGO opinion. The CCCA requests that the Joint Committee encourage the Director to respect and follow the risk assessment and recommendation process set forth in the WWG guidelines, and any deviations from those recommendations must be based on solid science and economic concerns, not political pressure from NGO's or subjective perceptions about public opinion.

Going forward, we would like to see the approach to management become adaptive, taking into account the dramatic increases in marine mammal populations. CDFW should also use the principle that guides the fishery law of the nation; namely, that regulations and restrictions placed on a fishery must be in direct proportion to the actual risk to ESA listed species, and take into account the economic importance of the commercial fishery to its coastal communities.

The CCCA has submitted our own detailed and carefully vetted proposal for further mitigating marine mammal interactions to the WWG and CDFW, but we have still not received any formal response from the State. We have offered to help facilitate wider and more frequent Whale surveys, since agency funding is limited and we have boats, planes and crews that could host them. We are designing a research study using our member vessels that will help improve the understanding of fleet dynamics in relation to whale migration. We are actively promoting our "slack line initiative" among our fleet because it has been proven that reducing the amount of slack in buoy lines greatly decreases the possibility of entanglements.

We have also proposed multiple practical and simple gear modifications to re-open the Southern half of the state in the springtime, which was closed by the terms of the settlement, that could be highly effective while not seriously changing how we already fish or be cost prohibitive, like the ridiculously impractical and highly expensive ropeless gear being promoted by the NGO's.

In conclusion, we ask that the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture support the crab fishing industry in this critical time. In particular, we ask that our coastal senators and assembly members publicly stand up for their many constituents in the dozens of coastal communities in their districts that are in their hour of need. We request that the chair and vice chair encourage CDFW and Director Bonham to also do everything possible to support this fishery and work with the CCCA to find workable solutions for our industry in the post-settlement / pre-Take Permit period.

In the near term, we request that the Committee, CDFW and its Director help secure a seat for our CCCA leadership and our attorneys at the table for the development of the critically important Habitat Conservation Plan and Incidental Take Permit application which will eventually guide the management of our fishery for years to come.

Thank you for including the CCCA in today's testimony and we look forward to working productively with the state legislature to preserve and protect this fishery into the future.”