



## Coalition of Coastal Fisheries

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.....Serving the needs of the coastal fishing industry and coastal fishing communities.....

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## H.R. 2168 - West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act 2015

23 July

Primary Sponsor: Representative Jamie Herrera Beutler

Thank you Chairman Fleming, ranking member Huffman, and Water, Power, and Oceans subcommittee members for providing this exciting opportunity to testify in **strong support** of the West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act of 2015.

### Key Take Away

**Fisheries success should be fostered and perpetuated not allowed to sunset.**

For the record: My name is Dale Beasley, I am a 4<sup>th</sup> generation fisherman that was hooked on fishing at the age of 10 the first time I went crab fishing with my dad in 1958 when wooden floats and hemp ropes were still pulled on low speed hand operated capstans not modern high speed hydraulic power blocks with high tensile strength lines with extremely high working loads that transformed the crab fishing industry which has grown into the lifeblood of the West Coast Fishing Communities. My fishing career spanned over 45 successful years of fishing which supplied 100% of my family's income just like it does for hundreds of other fishing families that are supported well by the Dungeness crab that has been a long-term bastion of stability, successfully absorbing and saving many fishermen from ruin from other fisheries in crisis over the years. In addition to being a lifelong fisherman I have dedicated myself to providing sound prepared leadership for the coastal fishing communities. The fishing fleet has placed trust in that leadership to protect and preserve fishing as I am President of two fishing organizations: Coalition of Coastal Fisheries whose members are listed at the left of this page and the Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association a leader in bringing the best science achievable to the discussion table to resolve or shine a bright light on marine water issues.

**Why is the West Coast Dungeness Crab Fishery so successful?**

In short, Dungeness crab fishery is an exceptionally well-managed model fishery where the fishing industry and the three state crab manage team work cooperatively in responsible partnership committed to the sound resource stewardship and an economically viable fishery where the overall community is nurtured as crab finds its way to the consumer's dinner plate providing long-term stability for the coastal communities. The Tristate management structure has passed its 20 year federal review successfully that dates back to 1996!

## **Precautionary State Crab Management – exemplary**

It is with great pleasure that I am able to report to this Water, Power, and Oceans subcommittee that the states of Washington, Oregon, and California have proven to be great stewards of the resource for multiple decades while providing ample flexibility and opportunity for crab industry to thrive through a Tristate structure under the umbrella of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission that provides the necessary management tools to biologically manage the crab fishery. Crab Management utilizes a very precautionary approach for sustaining a healthy crab stock important to meeting the needs of the coastal communities where good JOBS are often difficult to come by, especially in midwinter.

## **Requisite “hard look” at Tristate crab management outcomes**

Dungeness Crab Management's first priority has always been to sustain the resource and **prevent overfishing**. The highly proven simple **3 S** management approach (size, sex, and season) provides a highly sustainable luxury no other fishery in the nation can provide to **assure conservation of the resource**.

Luxury # 1 - No female crab are ever retained in the fishery and when caught instantly returned to the ocean.

Luxury # 2 - No male crab are harvested until after they have sexually matured and perpetuated the species utilizing the 6 ¼ inch carapace size harvest guideline.

Dungeness crab is extremely selective in harvest procedures that **protects the crab stock reproductive capacity** as a first priority placing the Dungeness crab fishery in a special conservation class by itself.

**Seasons** are adjusted to protect crab in their most vulnerable soft-shelled molt condition.

The crab pot design is highly species selective with near **zero bycatch** and **minimal fishing mortality**.

Two Escape rings per pot allow small juvenile and female crabs to escape the pot alive and unharmed **reducing handling mortality** and increasing overall fishery productivity.

**Biodegradable weak links** on the pot prevent lost gear from becoming derelict and **eliminating ghost fishing** providing additional productivity.

**Gear Recovery** programs financed by industry remove lost gear from the marine environment annually.

**Essential Fish Habitat** is preserved as the crab fishery only occurs on soft bottom and has no impact on marine geologic structures that support other coastal fish complexes habitats.

Historically the three states have a **uniform December 1<sup>st</sup> season opening** based on crab condition to guarantee the public a quality product. Closures that exist north of Klipsan Beach, Washington [46 28 00] are one of the unique requirements to meet federal tribal treaty obligations necessitated by the Rafeedie

Decision allocating 50% of the fish to 4 tribes which present management challenges and opportunities, a discussion that is beyond the scope of this testimony.

**Fair start provisions** require a 30 day stand-down for any areas with normal season delays and 35 days associated with tribal delays.

## **Tristate Management Response to meet industry capitalization challenges**

**Limited entry** has been initiated in all three states capping new entry into the crab fishery at about 1300 vessels on the entire coast – Mexico to Canada.

**Pot limits** in all three states are currently in place reducing production costs. In SW Washington waters the pot limits are further reduced at industry request by an additional 20% to help reduce the impacts of considerable effort shift from the Tribal U & A area closures and is in effect during the tribal season head start.

**Vessel size** and industry growth capacity is capped.

## **Federal Safeguard**

The West Coast Dungeness Crab Act of 2015 does not preempt federal authority. The existing Magnuson Stevens FCMA section 306 provides the Pacific Fisheries Management Council authority to develop a federal FMP if it should become necessary. Tristate management has a very long proven track record that has produced one of the best managed stable fisheries in the nation.

### **Please Retain the STATUS QUO**

**“If it’s not broken and working well, don’t try and fix it”.**

Everyone intimately involved in the West Coast Dungeness crab fishery supports the status quo and endorses H.R. 2168! The federal regional Pacific Fishery Management Council has found NO advantage in developing a federal FMP on two separate occasions both times recommending retention of state management and recently sent a letter of support for H.R. 2168 reaffirming the success of Tristate management of crab. Congress has authorized section 306 on numerous occasion in the past and found NO compelling reason to do otherwise.

State management is able to respond in a timely manner to the crab fishery changing needs. The current example is the recent area closure that is still in effect off just 38 miles of the Washington coast in over 1200 miles of the West Coast. WDFW and the health department efficiently responded to a Domoic Acid outbreak in a small area caused by a localized harmful algae blooms, the diatom, *Psuedonitzschia australis* which produces naturally occurring biotoxins that can have deadly effects to mammals including humans as bioaccumulation occurs further down the food web. The federal government can be of help addressing HABS, especially those that may be triggered by pollution and or ocean acidification.

Please include all the testimony to the West Coast Dungeness Crab Act from 1998 by reference which is still highly applicable today toward support for H.B. 2168.

The crab industry, the coastal states, and the PFMC thanks you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the crab and the coastal communities that rely on crab for their sustenance perpetuated by this extremely important and welcome legislation that will continue conservation of the resource that is **not a burden but**

**a fishery luxury** and prosperity of the coastal communities that depend deeply on Dungeness crab for their wellbeing while balancing the unique characteristics found nowhere else in the nation, the integration of federal tribal treaty obligations with a mandated 50/50 sharing of the fishery resources.

Testimony prepared by: Dale Beasley in consultation with other West Coast industry members in Washington, Oregon, and California



President Coalition of Coastal Fisheries

President of Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association

Member of the Washington crab fishery delegation to Tristate Dungeness Crab Committee

**4<sup>th</sup> Generation Fisherman 1<sup>st</sup> and Foremost with 45 years at sea experience [CA, OR, WA, AK]**

Original champion of the Magnuson FCMA

Balancing Fish and Community needs requires some flexibility

Founding Member Lower Columbia Solution Group appointed by Governor Kitzhaber

Member Technical Committee Scientific Development Team

Member of the University of Washington Sea Grant Program Advisory Team

Member of the national Water Protection Network

Member of the national Marine Fish Conservation Network

Member of the past Washington Coastal Erosion Taskforce appointed by Governor Locke

Promote new concept of Coastal Sediment Rights to stabilize shorelines

Member of Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council appointed by Governor Inslee

Member of Technical Committee

Member of the Pacific County Marine Resource Committee

Member of the Pacific County Shoreline Master Program Advisory Committee

**Chairman of the SMP Oceans Subcommittee**

Member original OPA 90 planning group for oil spill prevention on the Columbia River

Promote Assist Tugs for bulk oil and hazardous materials movement

Founding member of the National Weather Service Ad Hoc Improvement & Safety Committee

BS in Geology Western Washington University

Lifelong conservationist and strong advocate for sustainable fishing and coastal community wellbeing

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