



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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December 28, 2004

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SUBJECT: PUGET SOUND DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has received a large volume of correspondence from Puget Sound recreational crab fishers in response to the article printed in the September 30 edition of Fishing and Hunting News by J. D. Wade.

This letter is in response to your concerns in your letter to me dated November 16, 2004. This reply was also sent to constituents in response to that article.

Allocation of the state share of Puget Sound Dungeness crab between the state commercial and recreational harvest groups occurs according to guidelines established in the current Fish and Wildlife Commission Policy adopted in February 2000.

This policy establishes crab management in three of the six Puget Sound Crab Management Regions (map enclosed) for the exclusive benefit of the recreational fishery, including

- Region 4- South-Central Sound
- Region 5- Hood Canal
- Region 6- South Sound

The policy for the remaining three regions including Region 1 -North Sound, Region 2 East and West -North Central Sound, and Region 3 - Strait of Juan de Fuca - does not quantify allocation intent between state commercial and recreational fisheries. The policy guidance in these three regions indicates an expectation to provide for an economically viable and stable commercial harvest opportunity for high quality crab and to maintain a quality recreational fishery with emphasis on spring and summer seasons and recreational exclusive use areas.

Consistency with the Commission policy has been achieved by 1) designing recreational seasons with a minimum target harvest level similar to their average crab catches since 1996, and 2) providing commercial fishers with pounds in each region that is similar to their historical share.

While these recreational and commercial planning parameters are not premised on a percentage sharing formula, most people tend to think of catch sharing in those terms. The management approach implemented by the Department has resulted in a preseason target for the past two years of approximately 68 percent commercial and 32 percent recreational catch sharing for the upcoming season.

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The enclosed table listing the state commercial and state recreational pre-season targets and final harvest for the 2001 through 2005 seasons show how the actual catches compare to the preseason targets for both fishery groups.

Region 1 – Marine Area 7 – is the most abundant Dungeness crab region in Puget Sound. The annual average catch for years 1996-2003 for both state fisheries in this region is approximately 2,179,000 pounds. Prior to 2003, the recreational catch in this region was approximately 360,000 pounds during the 8 to 9 month season. The state commercial fishery took the remaining state share in this region. That is why the allocation Puget Sound wide favors the state commercial fishery.

The dramatic increase in the Puget Sound recreational crab catch since the policy was written in February 2000 has not changed implementation of the policy as originally intended.

Department staff has been working with the Puget Sound Recreational Crab Advisory Group to design harvest strategies with the intention of extending the season length for the 2005-06 fishery. Suggestions received from non-advisors on this topic generally support the advisors positions except more non-advisors view reduction of the daily limit of crab as a useful tool to extend the season length. Only a few advisors support reduction of the daily limit.

Based on input from the advisory group and non-advisory group sport crab fishers, the current revisions to the Puget Sound recreational crab fishery design under consideration by the Department for the 2005-06 season are as follows:

- Open all marine areas except Marine Areas 7 east and 7 north on either the third Saturday in June or on July 1. Open Marine Area 7 east on July 16 and Marine Area 7 north on August 16.
- Open all areas Tuesday through Saturday each week
- Reduce the daily bag limit to 4 or 5 crab per person

Staff are scheduled to provide the WDFW Commission with a Department recommendation during the January 14-15 workshop in Olympia.

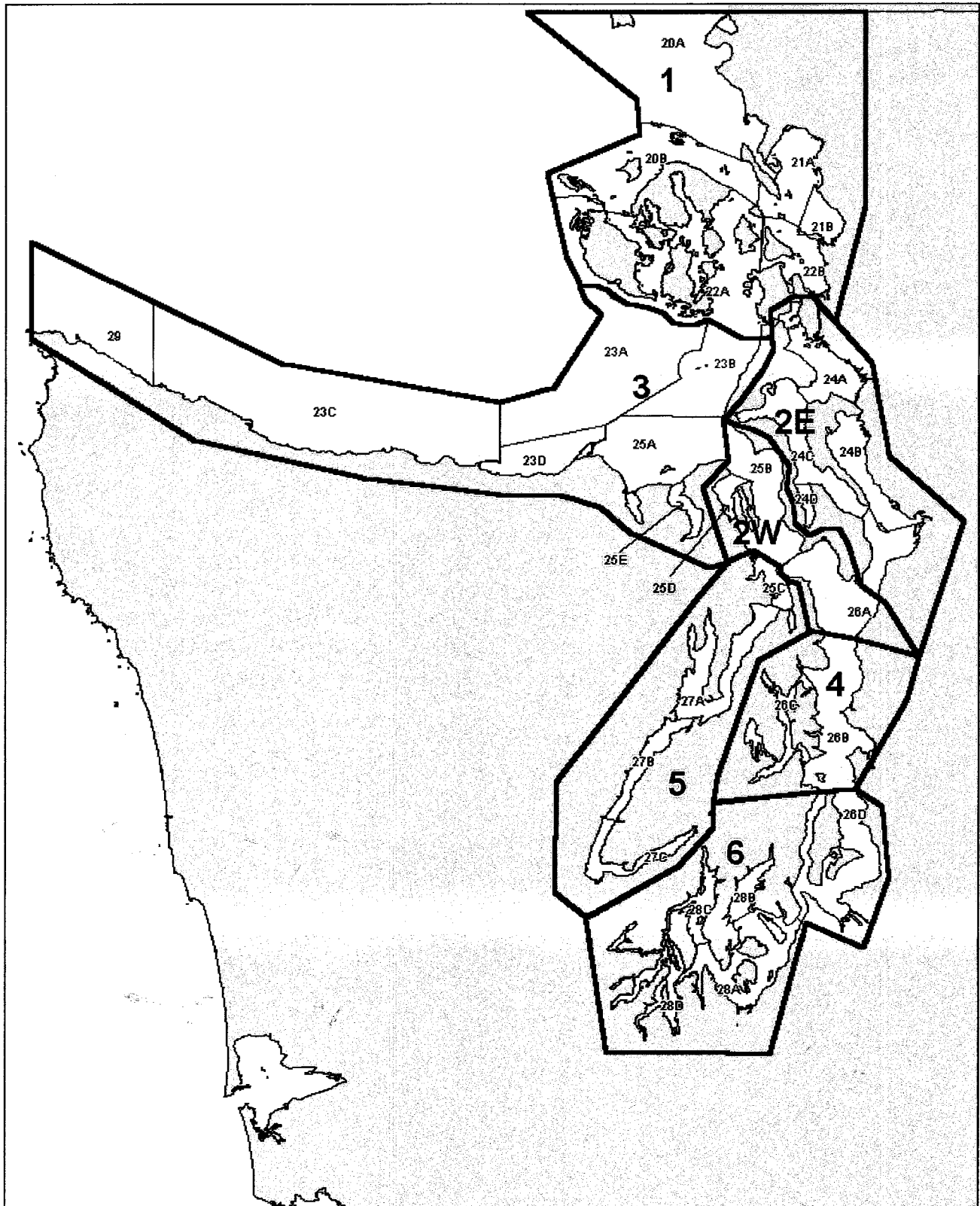
Sincerely,



Lisa Veneroso
Shellfish Policy Coordinator

cc: Jeff Koenings

Enclosures



**PUGET SOUND CRUSTACEAN MANAGEMENT REGIONS
AND CORRESPONDING MFSF CATCH AREAS**

As of June 1, 2001

Puget Sound Recreational Dungeness Crab Fishery Pre-Season Allocation (lbs) and In-season Harvest Estimates (lbs).

Marine Area	2001-02 Season			2002-03 Season				2003-04 Season				2004-05 Season			
	Pre-Season Allocation	1st In-season CRC Estimate. For The Period Jun.1- Sept. 5	Final In-season CRC Estimate. For The Period Jun.1- Feb 28	Marine Area	Pre-Season Allocation	1st In-season CRC Estimate. For The Period Jun. 1- Jul. 22	Final In-season CRC Estimate. For The Period Jun. 1- Feb. 28	Marine Area	Pre-Season Allocation	1st In-season CRC Estimate. For The Period Jun. 1-Sept. 1	Final In-season CRC Estimate. For The Period Jun. 1- Oct. 31	Marine Area	Pre-Season Allocation	1st In-season CRC Estimate. For The Period Jun. 1- Jul. 31	Final In-season CRC Estimate. For The Period Jun. 1 - Sept. 3
4,5	20,000	31,206	46,228	4,5	30,000	21,646	56,768	4,5	30,000	49,935	37,594	4,5	30,000	12,903	27,551
6	90,000	27,955	44,900	6	70,000	38,306	83,069	6	83,000	46,649	139,893	6	80,000	87,104	108,247
7	340,000	287,861	307,375	7	360,000	78,882	357,045	7	360,000	392,451	547,714	7	360,000	192,282	483,439
8-1, 8-2	350,000	314,030	430,171	8-1, 8-2	350,000	265,262	370,972	8-1, 8-2	350,000	493,118	390,504	8-1, 8-2	350,000	358,854	456,841
9	NA ¹	40,994	98,581	9	90,000	64,897	59,154	9	71,550	75,519	82,748	9	82,100	61,020	80,742
10	35,000	8,472	53,237	10	50,000	12,022	60,398	10	60,000	30,197	67,685	10	70,000	43,307	69,534
11,13	NA ¹	15,267	41,600	11,13	NA ¹	21,887	62,480	11,13	40,000	76,903	84,329	11,13	40,000	42,977	54,575
12	250,000	142,476	242,483	12	250,000	70,000	289,187	12	250,000	335,603	356,439	12	240,000	239,004	294,721
Totals	1,085,000	868,261	1,264,575		1,200,000	572,902	1,339,073		1,244,550	1,500,375	1,706,906		1,252,100	1037,451	1,575,650