

## **WDFW Increasing Patrols as Puget Sound Opens for Sport Crabbing**

### **Local News**

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The recreational crab fishery gets under way July 1 in most of Puget Sound, where Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) officers will be out in force on resource-protection patrols. All but one marine area in Puget Sound opens July 1. The exception is Marine Area 7, where the crab fishery opens July 15 in the area's southern portion (San Juan Islands/Bellingham) and Aug. 15 in the northern portion (Gulf of Georgia). Under new rules adopted earlier this year by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, all marine areas of Puget Sound will be open for crabbing Thursday through Monday of each week. Mike Cenci, WDFW's deputy chief of enforcement, said all crabbers should review the rules of the fishery before heading out on the water. "We've found that in the past a significant number of violations occur because people don't take the time to fully understand the rules of the fishery," Cenci said. "Those rules, such as properly measuring and identifying crabs, are important tools designed to protect the health of the crab population."

Information on the rules, including how to properly record and report catch information is available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/crab/>. The page includes links to a printable "Crabbing in Puget Sound" brochure and a "Puget Sound Recreational Crab Guide," both of which have information on crabbing regulations. The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Most marine areas will close the evening of Sept. 5 for a catch assessment. However, Marine Area 7 will remain open through Sept. 30. Sport crabbers in Puget Sound are required to record their Dungeness crab catch on a catch record card. Separate catch record cards are issued for the summer and winter seasons. The 2011 summer cards are valid through Sept. 5. Catch record cards are not required to fish for Dungeness crab in the Columbia River or on the Washington coast (marine areas 1-4). Rich Childers, shellfish policy lead for WDFW, reminds Puget Sound crabbers that they are required to record their Dungeness crab catch on their catch record cards immediately after retaining crab. "Having crab in your possession that are not properly recorded on a catch card is a violation and could result in a fine," he said. Crabbers have the option of reporting their crab catch for the summer season on the Internet after Sept. 5 or by mailing in their catch cards to WDFW. The mailing address and the Internet reporting site are printed on each catch card. "We need to hear from everyone who participates in the fishery — including those who didn't catch any crab — because more data provides greater accuracy in estimating the catch and developing future seasons," said Childers. Childers said crabbers who fail to file catch reports for 2011 will face a \$10 fine, which will be imposed when they apply for a 2012 fishing license. Anyone fishing for crab in Puget Sound must purchase a \$3 crab endorsement, which is free to fishers under age 15. All fishers age 15 or older also must carry an applicable Washington fishing license to fish for crab anywhere in Washington. WDFW's Enforcement Program encourages citizens who witness a fish and wildlife offense to report the violation. Reports can be filed by calling 1-877-933-9847, email at [reportpoaching@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:reportpoaching@dfw.wa.gov) or by text message sent to

847411 (Tip411). The text message must begin with the letters WDFWTIP followed by a space, and then a brief description of the violation and location.