

Most of Puget Sound opens for sport crab fishing July 1

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The recreational crab season gets under way July 1 in most of Puget Sound, where fishery managers with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) expect another good summer fishery. 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. 16 in the northern portion (Gulf of Georgia). The crab fishery in all marine areas of Puget Sound will be open Thursday through Monday of each week. Crabbers should note, however, that the season gets under way with a two-day opening (July 1-2), and will be closed July 3-4 before re-opening on its regular weekly schedule Thursday, July 5. Additional information on the crab fishery is available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/crab/>.

Rich Childers, shellfish policy lead for WDFW, said recent state and tribal test fisheries indicate the crab population in Puget Sound remains abundant. "The test boats have done very well," Childers said. "I expect this summer's fishery to be similar to last year's, when crabbing was good throughout the entire season in most areas of Puget Sound." 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. 3 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 2012 summer cards are valid only through Sept. 3. The winter cards will be available on Aug. 15 and are valid until Dec. 31. Catch record cards are not required to fish for Dungeness crab in the Columbia River or on the Washington coast (marine areas 1-4). Childers 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. 3 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. Crabbers who fail to file catch reports for 2012 will face a \$10 fine, which will be imposed when they apply for a 2013 fishing license. Anyone fishing for crab in Puget Sound must purchase a 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. More licensing information is available online at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>. Mike Cenci, WDFW's deputy chief of enforcement, said it is important for crabbers to review the rules of the fishery before heading out on the water. "Take the time to fully understand the rules, particularly the daily limit, how to properly measure and identify crab, and the catch record card requirements," Cenci said. "Our officers will be out on the water enforcing the regulations and ensuring boaters are complying with safe boating

practices.”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 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.