



State of Washington  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200 • (360) 902-2200 • TDD (360) 902-2207  
Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

December 28, 2018

The Honorable Kevin Van De Wege  
Washington State Senator  
212 John A. Cherberg Building  
Post Office Box 40424  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Brian Blake  
Washington State Representative  
314 John L. O'Brien Building  
Post Office Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Senator Van De Wege and Representative Blake:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is required to submit a report to the Legislature regarding the removal and disposal of derelict shellfish gear, including the allocation of funds for this purpose received through the sale of Dungeness Crab endorsements. Requirements for the report to the Legislature are outlined in RCW 77.32.430, Section 5(a):

*“(5)(a) The funds received from the sale of catch record cards, catch card penalty fees, and the Dungeness crab endorsement must be deposited into the state wildlife account created in RCW 77.12.170. One dollar of the funds received from the sale of each Dungeness crab endorsement must be used for the removal and disposal of derelict shellfish gear either directly by the department or under contract with a third party. The department is required to maintain a separate accounting of these funds and provide an annual report to the commission and the legislature by January 1st of every year. The remaining portion of the funds received from the sale of each Dungeness crab endorsement must be used for education, sampling, monitoring, and management of catch associated with the Dungeness crab recreational fisheries.”*

Please find (enclosed) a report including background on the issue and a summary of the Department's activities and expenditures. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Raquel Crosier, WDFW's Legislative Director, at (360) 902-2226.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Susewind".

Kelly Susewind  
Director

Enclosure



# Derelict Shellfish Gear Annual Report

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

December 28, 2018



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**

## Background:

Abandoned, lost, or discarded crab fishing pots in the waters of Puget Sound pose a threat to sea life and can degrade marine habitat. These lost crab pots – estimated at about 12,000 a year – can continue to catch and kill crab and other marine life, depleting key resources important to the ecosystem of Puget Sound and the region’s economy.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), tribal co-managers and other organizations are working to help remove this derelict shellfish gear from Puget Sound. A portion of the funds WDFW received from the sale of Puget Sound Dungeness Crab Endorsements – necessary to recreationally fish for crab in the Sound – go directly to this effort.

This work continues to improve the marine environment and helps to ensure crab populations remain sustainable; providing for commercial, tribal and recreational fishing opportunities that are economically important to the Puget Sound region.

To fulfill requirements of RCW 77.32.430

Dedicated derelict shellfish gear recovery funds expended in 2018: \$146,000



## Activities and expenditures in 2018:

- **WDFW contracts with the Northwest Straits Foundation to find and remove derelict shellfish gear** while the crab fishing season is closed. Using funds dedicated for this effort (\$1 from each crab endorsement sold), a total of \$92,000 was expended on the Northwest Straits Foundation contract to detect derelict pots using sidescan sonar and recover 426 commercial pots and 265 recreational pots. Trapped inside the recovered pots were 561 live and 269 dead Dungeness crab, illustrating the need to remove derelict pots that continue to fish.
- **WDFW enforcement officers and biologists, in coordination with treaty tribal co-managers, conducted “crab pot sweeps”** during the popular summer recreational crab fishery. The sweeps, funded by additional revenue from the sale of crab endorsements, took place on Tuesdays and Wednesdays when the recreational fishery was closed each week during the season. In 2018, this effort removed 1807 crab pots from Puget Sound, including 176 Canadian pots fishing illegally in U.S. waters. A total of 29 WDFW enforcement officers and six shellfish staff worked 58 days on the water, and additional days returning pots or disposing of the gear. Overall, WDFW biological staff in 2018 spent \$54,000 on gear sweeps, documentation, outreach, gear return and pot disposal.
- **In addition, WDFW Enforcement** officers spent a total of 1,953 hours conducting recreational crab shellfish patrols ensuring regulation compliance on both open and closed days.



### Recovered crab pots:

WDFW attempts to return crab pots that are marked with contact information to the owners, along with helpful information on how to prevent the loss of gear. Crab pots that cannot be returned, usually because they lack contact information, are donated to non-profit organizations for fund raising activities or disassembled and responsibly recycled or scrapped.