



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RECREATIONAL ANGLERS FUNDING PUGET SOUND DUNGENESS CRAB CONSERVATION AND DERELICT FISHING GEAR REMOVAL INITIATIVE

OLYMPIA– Washington Governor Chris Gregoire recently signed legislation that generates funding for new conservation, education and enforcement initiatives to aid Puget Sound Dungeness crab, including the removal of derelict crab pots. The increased funding is made possible through an increase to the Puget Sound crab endorsement fee, an annual license endorsement required to recreationally harvest Dungeness crab in the Sound. The annual endorsement fee is in addition to the cost of purchasing an annual shellfish or combination fishing license.

A key provision authored and supported by Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Washington directs \$1.00 of the recreational crab endorsement fee to remove thousands of derelict crab pots lurking beneath the waters of Puget Sound. Estimates from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Northwest Straits Initiative (NWSI) indicate that over 12,000 crab pots are lost in Puget Sound each year. Studies have shown that lost crab pots continue trapping and killing crab from ninety days to over two years, depending on pot configuration and the use of required escape rot cords. WDFW and NWSI estimate that approximately 180,000 crabs are trapped and killed in these derelict pots annually. This amounts to 340,500 pounds of Dungeness crab, or 4.2% of the total Puget Sound harvest.

Crab pots are lost in recreational, tribal and non-tribal commercial Dungeness crab fisheries. Until now, no dedicated source of funding has been available to locate and remove these derelict pots. The new dedicated funding mechanism is anticipated to generate approximately \$150,000-\$230,000 annually, depending on the number of endorsements purchased.

The remainder of the recreational crab endorsement fee increase will provide an additional \$500,000-\$700,000 annually to fund increased monitoring, enforcement and education efforts to further improve recreational compliance with all rules and regulations, including the use of escape rot cords and accurate catch reporting. This increased funding comes on top of the estimated \$600,000 already generated for these activities by the current endorsement fee.

*"Recreational crabbers have been asked to step up with their pocketbooks to fund additional monitoring, education, enforcement and derelict crab pot removal efforts, which clearly exhibits their commitment to sustainability, compliance with all fishery rules and reducing the senseless loss of Puget Sound Dungeness crab in derelict crab pots," said **Bryan Irwin, Executive Director of CCA.** "We hope tribal and non-tribal commercial fishermen – who harvest three-quarters of all Puget Sound Dungeness crab – will undertake a similar effort to improve the sustainability of the commercial fishery and fund the removal of deadly derelict commercial fishing nets and crab pots from Puget Sound."*

During the 2010 Legislative Session State Representative Christine Rolfes (D-Kitsap County) passed legislation requiring WDFW to prepare a report outlining the threat posed by derelict crab pots and an approach for addressing it. This year Representative Rolfes helped recreational anglers direct a portion of the endorsement fee increase to fund derelict crab pot removal. She also sponsored legislation (HB 1717) to stem the loss of commercial fishing nets -- or "ghost nets."

State Representative Christine Rolfes (D-23rd District) said, *"I commend the willingness of the recreational fishing community to support and fund these important Dungeness crab conservation and derelict fishing gear removal efforts. Many recreational fishers call the Kitsap Peninsula home and I know they care deeply about our fisheries and the health of Puget Sound."*

The Northwest Straits Initiative is expected to utilize the new funding to remove derelict fishing nets and crab pots.

"The use of funding from the recreational crab endorsement fee for removal of derelict crab pots will allow us to strategically tackle areas with the worst problem, and that's a big step forwards," said **Ginny Broadhurst, Northwest Straits Initiative Director**. "I appreciate the efforts and support from recreational fishing groups, including CCA and Puget Sound Anglers. Their willingness to step up, recognize the problem and support our removal efforts helped raise the issue with the state legislature and identify solutions."

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About CCA: Coastal Conservation Association is a non-profit organization comprised of 200 chapters in 17 coastal states spanning the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic and Pacific coasts. In 2007, CCA expanded into the Pacific Northwest and the organization has quickly grown to more than 9,000 members and continues to launch chapters in both Oregon and Washington. As the largest marine conservation organization in the country, CCA's strength is drawn from the tens of thousands of recreational anglers who make up its membership. Across the country, CCA's grassroots influence is felt through state capitals, U.S. Congress and, most importantly, in the conservation and restoration of our marine resources.