

FISH COMMISSION  
INTRA-DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

Special Comm. 1974 July 1974

DATE: July 9, 1974  
TO: Commissioners Eoff, Shields, and Smith  
FROM: Thomas E. Kruse  
SUBJECT: Closure of Beach Near Newport to Taking of Dungeness Crab

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In the last two weeks a problem has developed just south of the south jetty at Newport that has required action on the part of the Commission. Large numbers of crabs have migrated into some tide pools and shed their shells. These soft-shelled crabs have been vulnerable to the public during low tide periods and large numbers of people have waded into the areas and used rakes to collect crabs. The State Police had issued 30+ citations for taking sub-legal crabs, and large numbers of crabs were being killed during the raking process or by being stepped upon. Both the State Police and the staff asked us to take action to close this area.

After discussion with Walt Hershey on Friday, July 5, I tried to contact the Commissioners to discuss this problem with them. Commissioner Smith was the only individual available and after reviewing the situation, we decided that the beach should be closed. It appeared that a phone conference would be acceptable and we notified The Oregonian and Oregon Journal of our intended action. The Oregonian sent a reporter to sit in on the meeting. Dale Snow, Commissioner Smith, and I discussed the situation and Commissioner Smith and I took action to close the beach area from the south jetty at Newport south approximately 3-1/2 miles to the mouth of Thiel Creek for the personal use and commercial taking of Dungeness crabs. The regulation is only good for 60 days and can be reviewed at our Commission meeting July 31 if you wish.

Attached is a copy of the staff report on the situation by Dale Snow.

KRUSE:sg  
Attachment  
cc: Snow

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Yaquina Bay South Jetty  
Softshell Crab Problem

July 5, 1974

Problem

Annually the Dungeness crab sheds its shell in order to increase in size. This annual molt usually occurs in shallow water and in some instances near shore in tidepools and adjacent to jetties where sports fishermen can capture them.

Background

This year a large number of crab have moved into the area adjacent to the south jetty of Yaquina Bay to shed their shells. Sport fishermen in the process of catching these crabs with rakes are inadvertently killing or injuring significant numbers of sublegal and female crabs. This waste of the resource has resulted in considerable concern among enforcement personnel and local residents.

Discussion

It can be argued that the sport fisherman is enjoying himself and that biologically it makes no difference whether the crab are caught while soft and contain little meat or later when they are hard and full of meat. This is true; however, it is not considered to be a wise use of the resource to harvest these animals when not in prime condition and the destruction of significant numbers of sublegal and females is not desirable.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that it be illegal to take crab from the south jetty of Yaquina Bay and from the Pacific Ocean beach between south jetty of Yaquina Bay and the mouth of Thiel Creek until September 5, 1974.

C. Dale Snow, Program Leader  
Shellfish Investigations  
Fish Commission of Oregon  
Management & Research Division