

Status of the 1968-69  
Pacific Coast Dungeness Crab Fishery

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The preliminary 1968-69 season total of 44.1 million pounds of Dungeness crab for the combined landings of Washington, Oregon, and California are the highest landings ever recorded for the three mainland states, and is 2.2 million pounds higher than the previous record season of 1956-57. The catch for the West Coast excluding Canada was 53.2 million pounds, of which Alaska contributed 9.1 million<sup>1/</sup> (Figure 1). This exceeds the Pacific Coast 15-year mean of 34.1 million pounds by 19.1 million pounds.

Alaska

Landings in Alaska were down in all regions with a season total of 9.1 million pounds as compared to 13.2 million pounds in 1968 (Figure 2). This decline is possibly related to a poor survival of the 1965 year class or abnormally cold winter temperatures which inhibited the mass moulting which normally occurs in the spring. Either possibility would be reflected in a lack of legal-sized crab. Gear restrictions and the Tanner crab fishery may also be partially responsible for the decline by diverting efforts from Dungeness crab.

Washington

Coastal crab landings in Washington through July, 1969 totaled 18.2 million pounds (Figure 2). This is 7.4 million pounds greater than the 1967-68 season landings and 4 million pounds greater than the previous high landed in 1948. It is estimated that in excess of 20 million pounds of crab were harvested off the coast of Washington during the season which represents a record high for production.<sup>2/</sup> The Puget Sound fishery produced an estimated 0.8 million pounds. Crabs at the beginning of the season were of poor quality with one-third being softshell, one-third hardening and about one-third in a good hard shell condition. Consequently, the season, which started December 1, was closed on December 11. It reopened January 1 and crab condition was fair by mid-January but was never really good until the end of the season.

Oregon

Oregon crab landings through June 1969 reveal a catch of 11.7 million pounds. The season total is expected to be between 12.0 and 12.1 million pounds (Figure 2). This represents four seasons in a row when 10 million or more pounds were landed and one of the best seasons ever recorded. Landings were below normal on the central coast and above normal on the north and south coast, with one-third of the catch being landed at Astoria.

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<sup>1/</sup> Alaska data are summarized by calendar year.

<sup>2/</sup> Includes crab caught and landed in Oregon.

California

California statewide crab landings are expected to total 13.9 million pounds (Figure 2). This represents a 700,000 pound increase over the 1967-68 season and is nearly 5 million pounds over the 10-year average of 9.0 million pounds. The northern California area (Fort Bragg to Crescent City) accounted for 13.1 million pounds of the total and represents a record high for this area. Landings in the San Francisco area totaled 835,000 pounds and are well below the 10-year average of 1.8 million pounds. Prices received by the fishermen remained good throughout the season. The outlook for the 1969-70 season in central California, based on a post season cruise, is for an improved fishery. A preseason cruise is planned for northern California.