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Recreational Crabbing Outreach in Clallam County

CLALLAM MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Lael Butler 2018

Introduction

This report describes the 2018 recreational crabber outreach and engagement effort in Clallam County. The outreach effort implemented one of the recommended actions in the Puget Sound Lost Crab Pot Prevention Plan, which purpose is to address the problem of excessive lost crabbing gear during a three-year time frame (Northwest Straits Foundation, June 2016). Funding for the 2018 outreach effort was provided by Department of Ecology, EPA, and Northwest Straits Foundation. The Clallam County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) hired two interns to inform crabbers on proper crabbing technique to work on Goal 4 of the Lost Crab Pot Prevention Plan: *reduce crab pot loss resulting from user error in the recreational sector.*



Figure 1: Dungeness crab harvest (Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe)



Figure 2: Intern Lael Butler at Clines Spit boat ramp

The interns reached out directly to crabbers from June - September 2018 and provided hand out materials to stores selling crab equipment. This is the second year the lost crab pot prevention effort has been conducted by interns in Clallam County.

In 2010, the Northwest Straits Initiative estimated that 12,000 crab pots are lost in the Puget Sound area annually. Lost crab pots continue to fish on the sea floor capturing crabs and other marine organisms for many years; as organisms die in the pots, they act as bait for new prey. Removal of derelict pots can be costly. The Puget Sound Lost Crab Pot Prevention Plan is aimed at reducing the number of lost pots and consequently, fewer removal projects will be needed in the future.

Goals and Objectives

In 2018, the main goal was to educate recreational crabbers about proper crabbing technique as well as increase crabbers' knowledge on helpful tips that reduce the chance of losing a pot. Interns visited boat ramps every weekend to hand out crab kits, with a minimum goal of distributing 200 crab kits during the 2018 recreational crab season. The kits consisted of rot cord (to encourage proper use of escape panels), pamphlets from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) that summarized recreational crab harvest regulations, a map of Sequim Bay depicting "no-crabbing" zones, crab gages, as well as cards with helpful tips provided by the NWSC (Figure 3). The helpful tips are as follow:

- 1) Avoid high traffic, marine transit and ferry lanes.
- 2) Check tides and currents. Avoid crabbing during strong tidal changes and currents.
- 3) Make buoys more visible. Add a second buoy or stick and flag.
- 4) Use a weighted line to sink below the surface and avoid being cut by passing boats.
- 5) Weight the crab pots so they do not move in currents or tidal changes.
- 6) Use longer line. Use 1/3 more line than the water depth to allow for changes in tides and currents.
- 7) Secure lid and escape panels with cotton (biodegradable) escape cord. Crabs can escape from lost pots after the cord degrades.



Figure 2: informational handout provided by NWSC

In 2018, the interns had a second goal to gather information about the audience reached by the outreach effort. The two interns asked crabbers how many years they had been crabbing. This question addressed relative proportion of inexperienced/experienced crabbers. The interns wondered if inexperienced crabbers were making novice mistakes, or were many crabbers seasoned and simply didn't know or refused to follow the helpful tips? The two interns also asked if crabbers had received a crab kit last year in order to determine if this outreach program was still productive in reaching new crabbers.

Methods

The primary method used to distribute crab kits was driving to boat ramps and handing out kits to crabbers. Intern Lael Butler used last year's report to determine which ramps were the most active. The most active boat ramps were noted to be John Wayne Marina and Port Angeles Boat Haven. These ramps were visited first at the beginning of the season (early July), while the lesser used ramps were visited from mid-July to August. The higher use ramps were visited throughout the season to ensure the most contacts with recreational crabbers. The interns visited boat ramps only on Friday, Saturday or Sunday because last year's report recommended this approach would be the most productive. At boat ramps the interns identified themselves with baseball caps provided by the NWSC (Figure 4). The locations of visited boat ramps are displayed in Figure 5.



Figure 3: Assembled Crab Kits and clipboard used to record number of kits and crabbers' answers

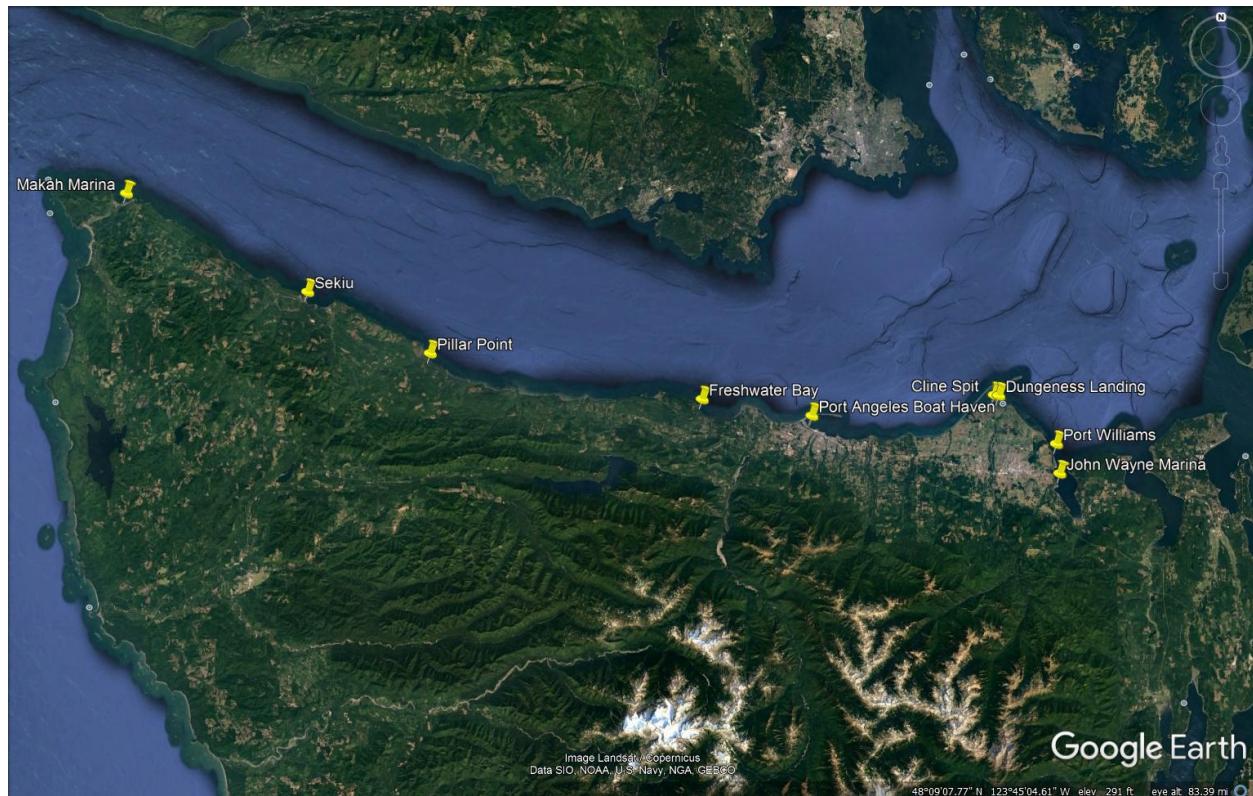


Figure 5. Map of boat ramps visited.



Figure 6: Kits were also distributed out front Swain's General store

In addition to distribution at boat ramps, kits were also distributed in stores. Intern Lael Butler placed kits in crab pots at Brian's Sporting Goods and Costco, in Sequim, as well as Swain's General Store in Port Angeles, throughout the season (re-distributing kits every other week) (Figure 6). Swain's and Brian's Sporting Goods welcomed the kits. However, Costco required multiple phone calls before permission was granted. Lael also placed some kits in "crabbing starter packages", which consist of unweighted line and a buoy, at Swain's General Store to target less experienced crabbers.

Two posters similar to the handout stating the "helpful tips" (Figure 3) were displayed at the Port Angeles Library and at John Wayne Marina. Additionally, twelve helpful tips handouts were placed in the John Wayne Marina boater kiosk.

Last year's intern Shannon Weaver formed a relationship with the Puget Sound Anglers North Olympic Peninsula Chapter, specifically with member Don Hatler. This year's interns utilized this relationship, speaking at a monthly meeting as well as handing out 20 kits through the organization.

Results

The number of visits to each location and the number of kits distributed is presented in the Table 1. Duration of boat ramp visits varied depending on the location, time of day, and weather. Generally, the visits averaged around 2 hours.



Figure 4: Crab kits zip tied to pots at Costco during the 2017 crabbing season

Table 1. Number of outreach events and number of distributed kits

| Location | | Number of visits | Number of kits distributed |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Boat Ramps | John Wayne Marina | 4 | 27 |
| | Port Angeles Boat Haven | 5 | 36 |
| | Freshwater Bay | 1 | 1 |
| | Port Angeles City Pier | 2 | 17 |
| | Makah Marina/ Neah Bay | 1 | 7 |
| | Mason's Marina/ Sekiu | 1 | 3 |
| | Dungeness Landing | 1 | 3 |
| Retailer | Mason's General Store | 1 | 5 |
| | Costco | 4 | 22 |
| | Brian's Sporting Goods | 4 | 53 |
| | Swain's General Store | 4 | 18 |
| Other | Out front Swain's | 1 | 19 |
| | Angeler's Meeting | 1 | 20 |
| Total | | 30 | 231 |

While last year more kits were handed out in stores, this year the interns focused on in-person communication. Handing out kits at boat ramps gave interns a chance to emphasize important tips with crabbers, answer questions, as well as ask questions of the crabber. This seemed to be an effective approach rather than simply placing kits in to-be-sold pots, not knowing if the buyer would read any of the material. However, due to this new approach, fewer kits (231) were handed out in 2018 compared to 2017 (275 kits).

The interns recorded crabbers' answers to "how many years have you been crabbing?" as: first season, 2-5 years, or more than 5 years. Once a crabber has been out for more than 5 years they are considered seasoned. The interns found that most crabbers were seasoned (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of new and seasoned recreational crabbers.

| Duration of Experiences | Percentage |
|-------------------------|------------|
| First Season | 8.11% |
| 2-5 years | 16.2% |
| More than 5 years | 75.7% |

The interns found that many crabbers recognized them from the Puget Sound Anglers' meeting, but very few had received kits from last year's interns. It is concluded that going to boat ramps is still successful in reaching new crabbers and outreach directly to the Puget Sound Anglers is successful (Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of recreational crabbers receiving a kit in 2017.

| Answer | Percentage |
|--------|------------|
| Yes | 7.14% |
| No | 92.9% |

Discussion

This was a productive year in reaching new (first contact) crabbers in Clallam County, and continuing to spread the knowledge of proper crabbing technique. The results conclude that most crabbers that this program engaged at boat ramps are seasoned. It is still unknown whether it would be more effective to target novice crabbers specifically. Interns Lael and Kennedy found it hard to ask questions that would answer which crabbers are largely contributing to the problem; such as how many pots have you lost, or are you using weighted line? Interns felt that most crabbers would not willingly share this information.

This season many crabbers were reached, however, it is hard to quantify how many fewer crab pots were lost as a result of the outreach. Data from WDFW on how many pots were reported lost each season could provide information on how beneficial these efforts are. Intern Lael Butler contacted WDFW to request this data, but has not received the information. She recommends making the request in early July to allow WDFW time to compile and provide the data from previous seasons.

The interns further recommend working to distribute kits at points of licensing as explained in Action 4.1.2 Lost Pot Prevention Recommended Actions Table (Puget Sound Crab Pot Prevention Plan) to reach all, both novice and experienced licensed crabbers.

The interns have attached a 'Before Crab Season' meeting outline to this report. The meeting outline is meant to assist next year's interns in hosting a crabber outreach meeting. This year's interns did not host a meeting. However, the interns did attend Jefferson county's successful before season meeting, noting that many crabbers were reached. The outline is intended to



Figure 8: Intern Kennedy Cameron with a fully assembled crab kit

make it easier for next years' interns, as the meeting should be scheduled at the very beginning of their internships.



Figure 9: Crab pots at Port Angeles City Pier

Crabber Outreach Before Season Meeting

It could be helpful to have a WDFW representative and a local crabber to help with the presentation.

BEFORE MEETING:

- Use Social media and Posters to spread the word
- Contact Jefferson County MRC for ideas to increase attendance (optional)
- Recruit WDFW representative and local crabber

LOCATION IDEAS:

- Port Angeles Library
- Dungeness River Audubon Center
- Feiro Marine life center
- Olympic Natural Resource Center

INFORMATION TO PRESENT:

Interns:

- Hand out kits to each person/ group present
- Go over Catch More Crab Card in detail

If WDFW is present:

- Basic crab biology
- Crabbing rules and regulations
- Gear regulations

*if WDFW does not come, a well-prepared intern could present these points

Local Crabber

- Specific gear for Clallam County crabbing that works well
- Bait
- Areas with plentiful crab, perhaps areas to avoid

*these points can be varied and added to

NOTES:

- At the 2018 Jefferson County before season meeting, interns experienced that some crabbers used this space to voice frustration on last year's poor catch. (having a WDFW biologist can come in handy here to diffuse comments)
- Snacks and drinks (optional)
- Possibly take a poll at the beginning (hand raises) to see what the experience level of your audience is (optional)
- Have a good amount of time set aside for questions
 - At the Jefferson County meeting around half the time was for attendees to ask questions

*this meeting does not need to be long, its goal is to inform more crabbers on proper crabbing technique