



Washington Sea Grant
University of Washington
Condon Hall
Box 355060
3900 7th Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98195

206.543.6600 | waseagrant.uw.edu

The U.S. West Coast [Crabber-Towboat Lane Agreement](#) is a voluntary, cooperative program established by the West Coast Dungeness crab fishing fleet and West Coast tug operators to mutually avoid damage caused by interactions between tugs/tows and Dungeness crab gear. This program has a high level of compliance within the fishing fleet and among towing operators. During the crab season, which can start as early as November 28, the crab fleet avoids deploying gear in the towing transit lanes, and towing operators make sure their vessels stay in those lanes. This approach is highly effective in reducing the damage caused by crab pot buoy line becoming caught in props or fouled on tow bridles and in reducing the number of “cut-off pots for fishermen.

It is generally understood that fishermen are not justified in suing a towing company for loss of pots if a tug is operating in the tow lanes. However, most West Coast towing companies do pay fishermen for damages if one of their tugs inadvertently tows outside of the tow boat lanes.

In late November or December, when the crab season starts, over 100,000 crab pots will be deployed off the Oregon coast, and more off of Washington and California. Generally, the pots will be inside of 125 fms water depth. We encourage all West Coast crab and tug vessels to download the tow boat lane files from our webpage. The University of Washington Sea Grant program administers the agreement and hosts the webpage. Alternatively, program coordinator Jenna Keeton (keetonj@uw.edu, 206.543.7009) can email you, or the vessel, a file. The [webpage](#) has downloadable files in the following formats:

Time Zero
Nobeltec Visual Navigation Suite
Coastal Explorer by Rosepoint
P-Sea WindPlot II
OLEX
ECC Globe
Maptech Offshore Navigator
KML (Google Earth)