

Crabber-Towboat Lane Agreement & West Coast Obstructions and Navigation Update Fall Meeting

Morning session: Crabber-Towboat Lane Agreement

Friday, November 7th, 2025 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Participants:

Joan Drinkwin, Natural Resources Consultants, Scott McMullen, Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee, Kyle Antonelis, Natural Resources Consultants, Joe Solberg, Columbia River Bar Pilots, Bob Edder, Newport fisherman, Jamie Fuller, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, Kelly Snoden, WA Department of Ecology, Jennifer Hagen, Quileute Tribe, Crystal Adams, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, Chris Biggs, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, Brad Trammel, American Waterways Operators, Megan Hintz, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, Natasha Novikova, ForSeas Solution, Brian McHale, Columbia River Crab Fishermen's Association, Rob Bolick, Kirby Corporation, Leo Lucas, Amix Marine Service, Doug Schenk, sailor, Nicole Baker, Net Your Problem, Rob Hudson, sailor, Jenna Keeton, WA Sea Grant

Towlane incidents:

Washington Sea Grant (WSG) received four incident calls since the spring Crabber Towboat Lane Agreement meeting:

1. March 17, 2025: Tug out of the towlanes, Newport OR
2. April 3, 2025: Tug interaction with pots in Advisory lanes, Oregon
3. April 17, 2025: Tug interaction with crab pots, Coos Bay, OR
4. General: Crab gear in towlanes Grays Harbor NW to Seattle

Towlane discussion

Summer towlane date revision: Crab fishermen in attendance requested revising the summer towlane from **April 24 - November 25 to May 1 - November 27**. Tugboat operators in attendance found no issue with this change. **Next steps:** Jenna (WSG) will have conversations with several tug companies to ensure no issue. A final decision will be made at the Spring 2026 towlane meeting. Dates are not incorporated on the newly printed towlanes thumbdrives.

Advisory lane reminder: The Advisory lanes are areas seaward of the outside two lanes and may have crab gear. Tugs may choose to follow these suggested tow lanes designated by red lines when possible during the crab season."

Proposed subsea cabling south of Westport WA: There is a proposal to install six HDD (Horizontal Directional Drill) conduits under the ocean beach near Grayland, WA. We don't know if any have been installed yet. The plan is to land a submarine cable coming from Alaska in one conduit, probably in 2028. The other five pipes would be installed, sealed off and remain temporarily vacant. A subsea cable, buried ~1.5 meters below the seafloor would be installed in 2028, at the earliest. Cable companies are actively trying to reach out to fishermen. No issues are foreseen for fishermen besides burial activities. Electromagnetic fields have a negligible impact on fish or crab. Cameras on existing cables show no issues with cable trenches. Anyone with questions, contact Scott McMullen, smcmullen@ofcc.com.

Towlane education: Posters and thumbdrives have been disseminated to 22 tug companies (thank you Grays Harbor Marine Resource Committee for funding the printing of new thumbdrives and to Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee for updating navigation software and printing the thumbdrives). The crab fleet will receive a postcard during their hold inspections. Opportunities for additional outreach: West Coast Fishermen facebook page, WDFW will contact fishers who set pots inside the towlanes thanks to electronic monitoring, direct outreach with tribal communities on the North Coast, direct mailings to zipcodes with many fishers, outreach at WorkBoat Expo. Tug operators who find pots in the towlanes in state waters can contact Jamie Fuller, Jamie.Fuller@dfw.wa.gov.

Fleets Directory: Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee provided WA Sea Grant with a contact list of XX tugboat companies which is helpful when tug and crab pot incidents occur. Seven new tugs have been added to the list since the spring meeting. The list will be posted on the WA Sea Grant website once fishermen contacts are added. **Next steps:** add Habormasters for each port, dispatch phone number for tug companies and captain fishermen ([associations](#)).

Towlane Savings Valuation Study: Joan Drinkwin and Kyle Antonelis of Natural Resources Consultants are working to understand the effectiveness and potential cost savings of the Crabber Towboat Lane Agreement. See attached presentation. jdrinkwin@nrccorp.com and kantonelis@nrccorp.com

Next meeting date: Friday, March 6, 2026

Afternoon session: West Coast Obstructions and Navigation Update (WCONU)

Friday, November 7th, 2025 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Participants:

Nicole Baker, Net Your Problem, Jill Smith, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Joe Solburg, Columbia River Bar Pilots, Scott McMullen, Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee, Ellie Brauer, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Jamie Fuller, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, John Moriarty, U.S. Coast Guard, Natasha Norikova, ForSea Solutions, Peter Schrappen, American Waterways Operators, Matt George, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Bob Edder, Newport fisherman, Kelly Snoden, Washington Department of Ecology, Crystal Adams, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission

Partner updates:

American Waterways Operators: Along the Duwamish River, gillnets are in place which is problematic for safe navigation. The Washington Department of Ecology is hosting a subcommittee within the Harbor Safety Committee to encourage communication between Tribes and the maritime industry on November 20, 2025.

Commercial Dungeness crab psot-season updates:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Whales are present and the upcoming season is delayed. See attached presentation. Ellie Brauer, Elizabeth.Brauer@wildlife.ca.gov.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife: Domoic acid recorded at safe levels on the North and Central Oregon Coast. The South Coast has sparse levels. Derelict gear retrieval last year was the best collection to date. Several fishing boats are going out soon to drop pots to continue domoic acid testing. See attached presentation. Jill Smith, jill.m.smith@odfw.oregon.gov.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: The season opener is delayed in 2025 and last year's gear recovery program was successful. See attached presentation. Matt George, matthew.george@dfw.wa.gov.

National Weather Service marine weather update: NWS staff were unable to attend the meeting due to the lapse in appropriations. An email update was shared, "There are not any major NWS updates for the meeting. Buoy 46002 which is 275 nm west of Coos Bay is back and operational after being out for years. Buoy 46005 (offshore of Washington) was going to be replaced in October, but is now scheduled for Fall of 2026." Trenea Jensen, Trenea.Jensen@noaa.gov.

U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Port Access Route Study (Pac-PARS) update: There is no update since the spring meeting. All work has stopped due to the lapse in appropriations, however a contract was awarded for the impact statement. John Moriarty, john.f.moriarty@uscg.mil.

Net Your Problem presentation: Nicole Baker with Net Your Problem presented about their end-of-life net and line recycling program, tailored for the maritime industry. If you have net and line materials to recycle, please let Nicole know. See attached presentation. Nicole Baker, nicole@netyourproblem.com.

Partner updates: The Columbia River Bar Pilots remind crab fishermen to have your forward sodium lights off while transiting the Columbia River Bar so the Bar Pilots can see your running lights. Matt George (WDFW) and Jill Smith (ODFW) will send out this notice to their fleets.

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