This indicator tracks the annual estimate of Dungeness crabbing for personal use by summarizing catch record card (CRC) data. Personal use is defined here to include harvest for recreation, food security, cultural and family heritage, as well as other personal and emotional experiences. The indicator does not include tribal harvest. Harvest patterns are shown by the number of people participating and the total pounds of Dungeness crab caught per year in the non-tribal, noncommercial fishery.

Key Vital Sign Indicator Results

- Crabbing is one of Puget Sound’s most popular noncommercial fisheries. Each year over 200,000 people purchase a Puget Sound Dungeness crab endorsement card, which is required to harvest crab for personal use.
- Between 2007-2021 the greatest number of endorsements were issued in 2015 (243,934). Total harvest for personal use also peaked in 2015. That year crabbers caught nearly 2.7 million pounds of Dungeness crab soundwide. Endorsement cards issued remained high in 2021 (233,108) but harvest declined to under 1.6 million pounds.
- Dungeness crab catch is reported by 11 Puget Sound Marine Areas. Most of the annual harvest comes from Marine Area 7 (covering the San Juan Islands and Bellingham Bay) and Marine Areas 8-1 and 8-2 (covering east of Whidbey Island including Skagit Bay and Port Susan).
- Since 2015 an increasing number of harvest closures have been required for parts of Puget Sound. As a result, total harvest has declined and the progress of this indicator is determined to be “Getting Worse”.
- In 2018 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Tribal Co-Managers closed Marine Areas 11 and 13 (encompassing Vashon Island and South Puget Sound) to any harvest in response to continued declines in the Dungeness crab population. Marine Area 11 was reopened to harvest on a limited basis in 2020 and 2021. Harvest closures have also impacted Marine Areas 10 (Seattle-Bremerton area) and 12 (Hood Canal – South of Ayock Point) in recent years.

Data Source
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Puget Sound Dungeness Crab Catch Record Card

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