

'IT'S A SLOW CRAB YEAR'



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Crew of the F/V *Amanda C* prepare to offload crab amid stormy conditions at Ilwaco Landing in early January. The stormy weather has limited fishing opportunities for local fleets in recent weeks.

Coronavirus, weather disrupt commercial Dungeness crab season

Fish processors adjust to far reduced salmon landings

By **LUKE WHITTAKER**
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PACIFIC NORTHWEST — Rough weather, tough tariffs and an ongoing respiratory outbreak in China have stunted the commercial Dungeness crab season in Oregon and Washington so far this season.

Catch totals from fishery managers indicate about 50% of last years' total over the same period.

"It's a slow crab year for us," said South Bend Products General Manager Dean Antich.

Relentless storms through most of January have kept much of the fishing fleet in port, particularly smaller ves-



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A worker loads 5-pound cans of Dungeness crabmeat Tuesday, Jan. 28 at South Bend Products in Chinook. Crab that would have been sent to China is now largely going to local retailers, restaurants and canneries.

sels unable to safely operate in rough seas.

"Weather has been a big part, it's kept these guys in," Antich said. "We haven't had good, fishable stretches of weather. Also I think there's less crab down here this year than guys had last year. We're off a fair percentage compared to what we've had in the past."

The crab landings this season have been "about half" of last year at this point, according to WDFW Coastal Shellfish Manager Dan Ayres.

As of Tuesday, Feb. 4, the latest landing figures indicate that 5,087,762 pounds of Dungeness were caught off the Washington coast by non-treaty commercial crabbers. This includes crab caught off of Oregon and landed in Washington. A majority of the catch (49%) came from the area (60A-2) just off the Long Beach coast, between Westport and Cape Disappointment, and the area (61) south of Cape Disappointment (35%). Willapa Bay has accounted for roughly 10% of the catch, approximately 500,000 pounds, according to figures from WDFW.