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The Marine Mammal Center, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, and The Nature Conservancy Launch Collaboration to Protect Whales and Support California's Dungeness Crab Fishery

New partnership, backed by the Clean Break Fund, pairs whale science, commercial fishing expertise, and conservation to reduce entanglement risk while sustaining a healthy fishery

October 22, 2026, California — The Marine Mammal Center, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) today announced the Dungeness Crab and Whale Conservation Collaborative, a new partnership bringing together scientists, commercial fishing, and conservationists to protect whales while supporting a healthy, open California Dungeness crab fishery.

Supported by a three-year grant from the Clean Break Fund, the collaboration represents a new approach to a longstanding challenge: bringing together different perspectives and expertise to develop better information and more collaborative solutions for whales and the fishery.

“Right now, one of the biggest obstacles to protecting whales in this fishery is simply not knowing, in real time, where they are,” said **Kathi George, Director of the Schwartz Cetacean Conservation Program at The Marine Mammal Center**. “By bringing together different monitoring technologies, scientific expertise, and the knowledge of the fishers who are on the water every day, we have an opportunity to build a much clearer picture of whale presence and behavior. That information can help inform decisions that reduce entanglement risk while supporting a sustainable fishery.”

“For generations, the Dungeness crab season has sustained our local fishing communities and a vibrant coastal economy with a California staple, but in recent years, costly delays have cut into its most critical catch,” said **Chris Larsen, co-founder and Executive Chairman of Ripple Inc. and founder of the Clean Break Fund**. “We live in the innovation capital of the world and the technology and expert partners exist today to both protect marine life and keep crab boats on the water for longer – we just have to be smarter about how we do it. This new collaboration brings scientists, conservationists, and fishermen into balance by deploying the most effective, modern methods available, sharing data in real time, and informing more dynamic fishery management decision-making.”

“California's commercial fishermen have a long history of finding solutions to challenges on the water,” said **Lisa Damrosch, Executive Director of PCFFA**. “This partnership brings that experience together with some of the best minds in science and conservation, with fishermen at the table from the very

beginning. Together, we have an opportunity to find a better balance between protecting whales and sustaining a healthy, viable Dungeness crab fishery.”

“This collaboration will help strengthen the information that supports management decisions,” **said Kate Kauer of The Nature Conservancy.** “By helping management systems better incorporate new data and respond to changing conditions, we can improve outcomes for whales and fishing communities.”

The Marine Mammal Center will lead the development of an integrated whale monitoring system, combining data from vessel surveys, drones, shore-based observations, and underwater acoustic gliders to improve understanding of whale presence, distribution, and behavior. PCFFA will bring commercial fishermen directly into the science and conservation effort through industry-led vessel surveys and participation in entanglement investigations, ensuring the fishing community’s knowledge and experience help inform the work from the start. The Nature Conservancy will lead efforts to expand industry-led vessel-based whale surveys and satellite-based whale detections, advance gear recovery technology, and support improvements to the data systems and policies that inform fishery management.

The collaboration will share its findings with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and other relevant partners to help inform the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP) and related efforts to manage entanglement risk. By improving the information available to decision-makers, the partnership aims to support a more informed, adaptive approach to protecting whales and sustaining the fishery.

“Protecting whales and supporting a healthy fishing industry are goals we can work towards together,” the partners said. “Addressing a challenge this complex takes collaboration, a willingness to learn from one another, and a commitment to finding solutions grounded in science and the experience of people who work on the water. This partnership is an opportunity to do that work together.”

ABOUT THE MARINE MAMMAL CENTER

The Marine Mammal Center is a global leader in marine mammal health, science and conservation, and is the largest marine mammal hospital in the world. As a leading contributor to the global body of research and knowledge about marine mammal medicine and ocean health, the Center generates research findings and scientific outputs at volumes comparable to top academic institutions and prides itself on gathering and providing open research data that is free to access, reuse, repurpose and redistribute. The Center’s teaching hospital and training programs operate globally with headquarters in Sausalito, CA. The Center has rescued more than 27,000 marine mammals from 600 miles of authorized rescue area along the California coastline and Hawai‘i Island. The Center’s mission is to advance ocean health through marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation, research, and education.

For more information, please visit MarineMammalCenter.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

ABOUT CLEAN BREAK FUND

Backed by philanthropist and business leader Chris Larsen, the Clean Break Fund makes power-shifting strategic bets based on three core commitments for taking action on climate and Artificial Intelligence where others hesitate: speed, impact, and accountability. CBF supports the kind of ideas this moment demands: bold strategies that break through inertia, create real shifts in possibility, and build unlikely

partnerships. The fund supports innovative nonprofits, researchers, advocates, and technology companies working to accelerate pollution removal, strengthen corporate accountability, safeguard workers and families, generate public benefit, and build bipartisan policy bridges for more effective climate policies.

ABOUT THE PACIFIC COAST FEDERATION OF FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS

The Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA) is the leading voice for California's commercial fishing industry, representing the majority of the state's commercial fishing fleet. PCFFA advocates for science-based fisheries management and reasonable, responsible regulations that balance resource protection with a productive, economically viable commercial fishing industry. Our work ensures that the knowledge, experience, and interests of commercial fishermen are represented in the decisions that shape the future of California's fisheries. For more information, see www.pcffa.org

ABOUT THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, TNC creates innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. TNC is tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more resilient. The Nature Conservancy is working to make a lasting difference around the world in 86 countries and territories (41 by direct conservation impact and 45 through partners) through a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. For more news, visit the [newsroom](#) or follow The Nature Conservancy on [LinkedIn](#).

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