Community science to capture the leading edge of an invasion: European green crab on Washington State’s inland shorelines

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Green Crab Monitoring
First sighting of European green crab in inland Washington confirmed

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Crab Team volunteers discovered the first confirmed sighting of a European green crab along inland Washington shorelines while conducting their regular monthly monitoring earlier this week. Volunteers at Westcott Bay, on San Juan Island, discovered the large adult male in one of their Fukui traps (the larger of the two types we use). Because the crab was an adult, it is believed that it washed in to the area as a larva in 2015 or 2014, possibly from the nearby Sooke Inlet population, or even as far as California.
European green crab
Carcinus maenas
Coastal spread of European green crab did not initially include the Salish Sea.

And initial introduction to the Salish Sea was human-mediated.
Inland shorelines could be **more protected** than the coast:
- Net outward surface flow
- Reversals may not overlap with spawn timing

Inland shorelines could be **more vulnerable** than the coast:
- More suitable habitat
- More overlap with shellfish growers
- More larval retention
Challenges for agency management

• Limited management tools
• Labor intensive
• Large geographic scope relative to organism
• Agencies have limited infrastructural flexibility
Community Science Approach

- Engaging and tractable
- Clear and urgent application
- Broad geographic scale
- Local application
Management

- Management mandate
- State-wide network of managers

Outreach & Research

- Species expertise
- Research collaborations
- Community stewardship
- Communications
1. Sensitive for European green crab

- Target highly suitable habitat
- Multi-modal searches
- Repeated sampling

Tinyurl.com/wagreencrab
1. Sensitive for European green crab

2. Doable and engaging for volunteers
   - Site access and timing
   - Volunteer comfort/safety
   - Value of “bycatch” data
1. Sensitive for European green crab
2. Doable and engaging for volunteers
3. Scientifically valuable
   - Data verification
   - BACI Sampling design
   - Consistent implementation
Crab Team Early Detection Network

56 sites

High risk sites

Trained Monitors

Baited trapping

April - September

Molt Hunt

Shoreline Features
“Capturing the leading edge:”

- Very first capture made by volunteers
- 4 new detections made by volunteers during regular monitoring
- 3 new detections made by agency/tribal partners in program
- 2 new detections made due to outreach and partner engagement
1. Early Detection
   - Monitors:
     - Volunteers (225)
     - Agency (15)
     - Tribal Staff (15)
   - Public

2. Assessment
   - State Agency or Tribe
     - Supported by:
       - Crab Team Staff
       - Local managers

3. Management
   - Local Stakeholders
     - Supported by:
       - WDFW
       - Local managers
       - Volunteers

Intensity and duration of effort
Compromises are made
1. Taxonomic resolution, breadth
2. Site selection
3. Scale of sampling

Uncontrollable outcome
1. We don’t control management
2. Messaging is important to maintain interest/ momentum
3. Structure can be confusing and frustrating to volunteers

Volunteers are not free
1. Training & Support
2. Engagement/Retention
3. Extra work (e.g. Bait/prep)
4. Continuing education

Not infinitely scalable
1. Saturating volunteer pool
2. Personal relationships
3. Agency/Tribal partners can help with this

Lessons Learned
- Increased scope
- Follow through and local investment

- Formalized response structure
- Resources

- Informed management
- Opportunity to learn and collaborate
Thank you!

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