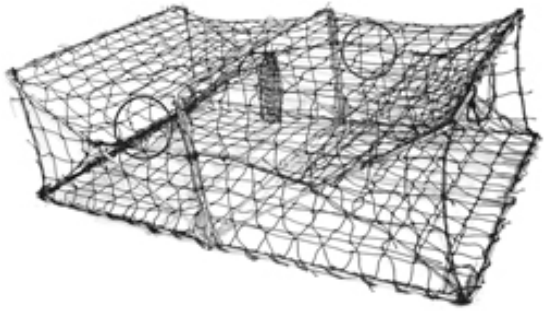
Dummies Guide to Crabbing

By Glen “G-Whiz” Armas



Danielson Square Pot



Promar Folding Trap



Promar Collapsible Round Trap



Hoop Net



Deluxe Hoop Net

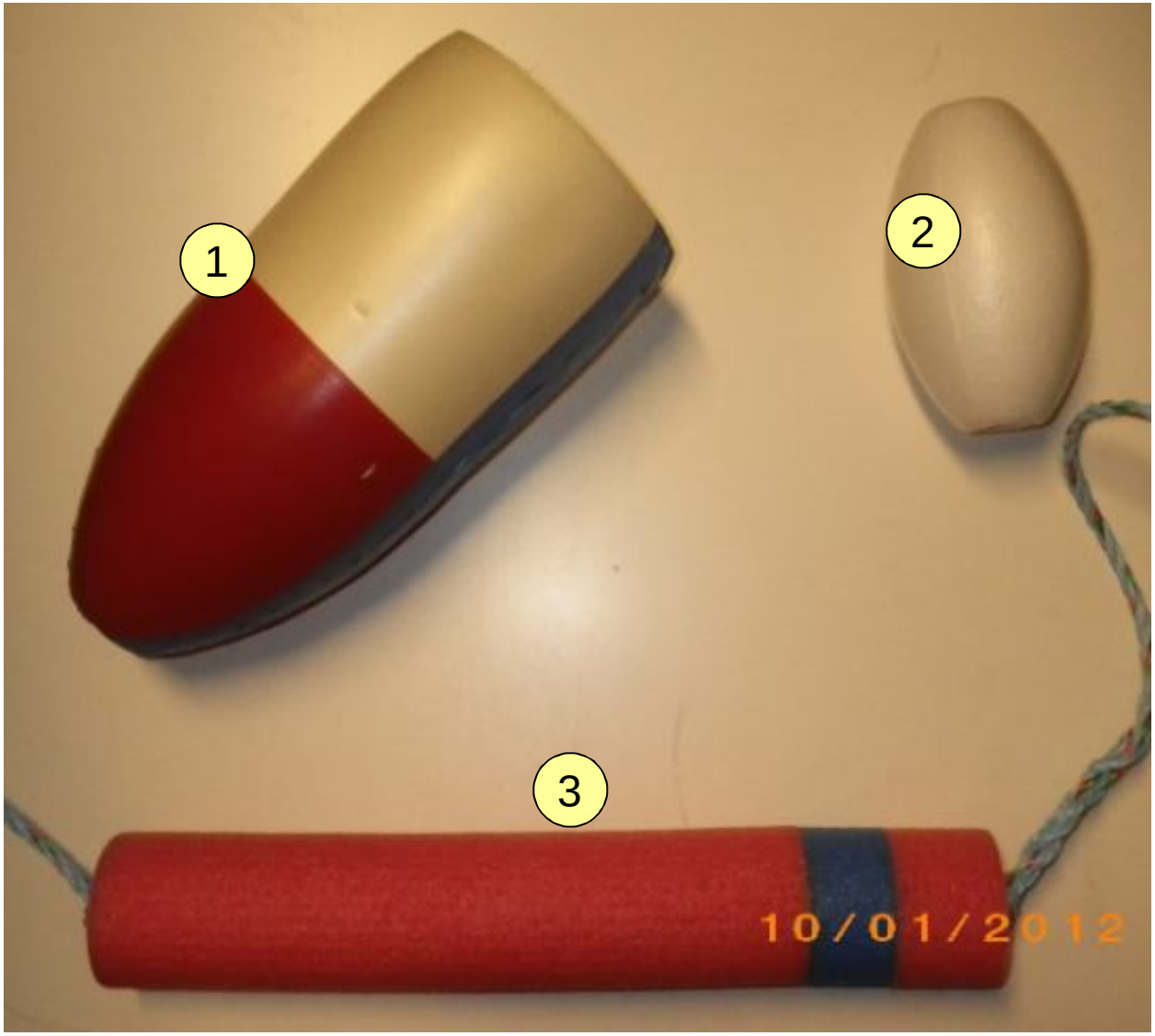
- Leaded or Un-Leaded
  - Non-weighed lines float and can get tangled in boat props
  - Weighed lines are heavier; my require more floatation



- Nylon vs PolyPro
  - Nylon stretches when pulling
  - PolyPro extremely buoyant

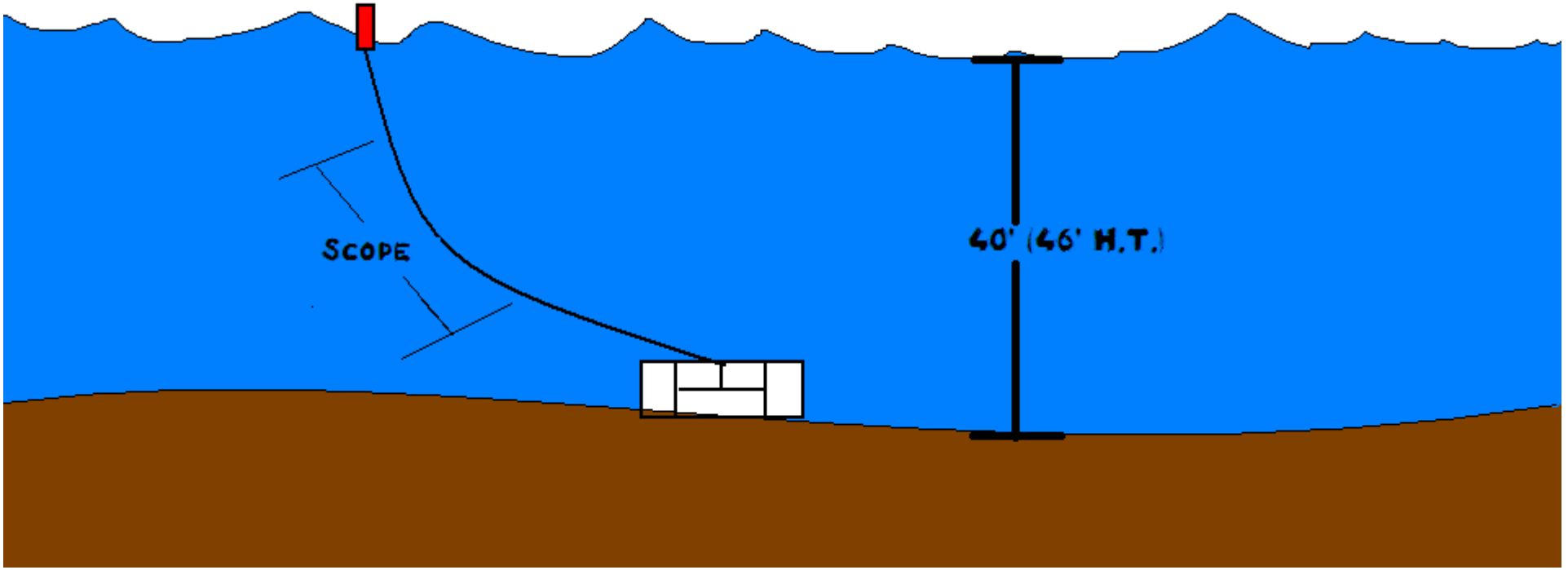


1) Foam Buoy
2) Egg Float
3) Pool Noodle
4) Plastic Jug
(not shown)

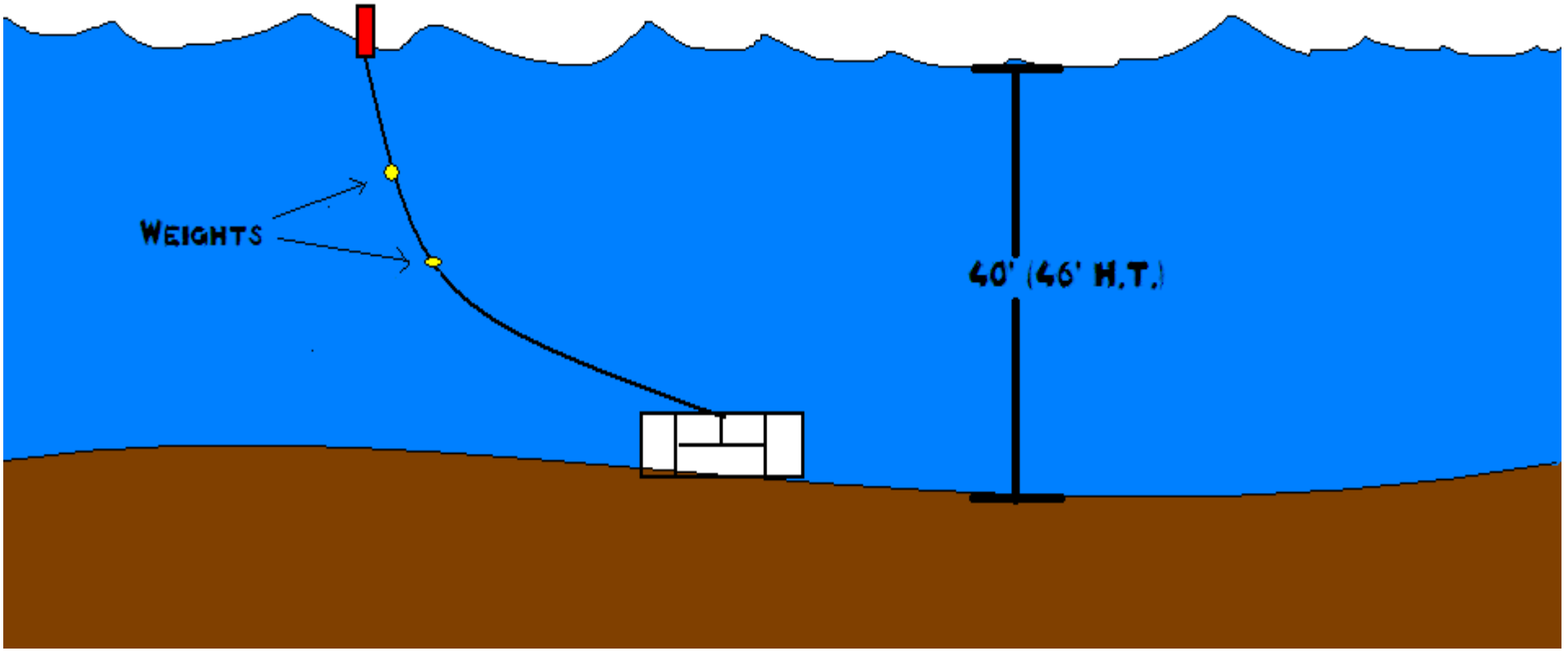


1. Bait Jar
2. Zip Ties
3. Line Weights
4. Lead roll
5. SS wire
6. Zinc
7. Cotton String
8. Bait Hanger
9. Bait bag
10. Elastic Band
11. ID Tag
12. Plastic Hook

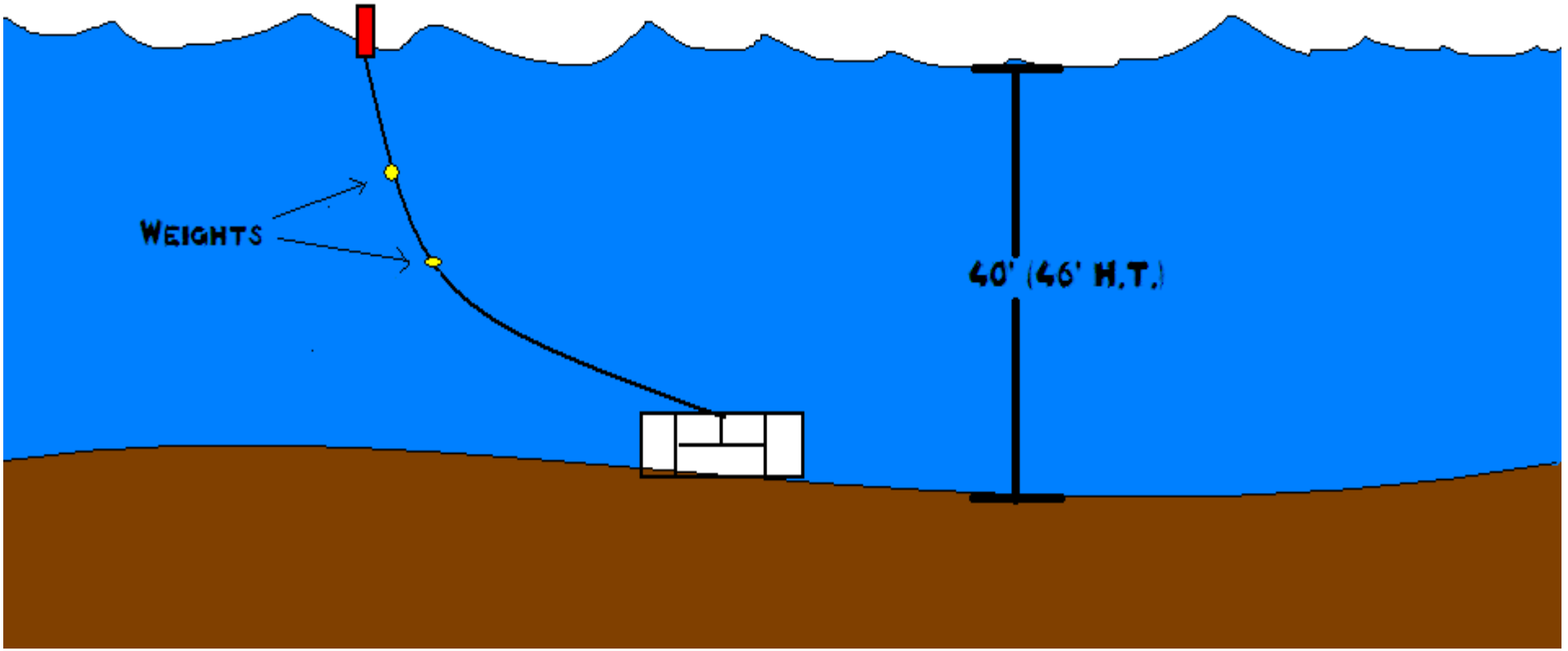




- Rope Length:
  - Total Length = Depth + (Depth x 20%)
  - 48’ = 40’ depth + 8’ scope
  - Make your rope length in “Shots”; i.e. 25’, 50’, 75’, etc.
  - If you use more line the required, coil up excess and ziptie it at the base of the trap.



- Line weights:
  - If you are using non-weighted lines, you should insert lead weights to keep the excess line from floating on the surface and becoming a boat hazard. Only use enough weight to submerge the line below the surface, but not pull down on the bouy/float.(15’ below the buoy)



- Buoy / Float:
  - Use only enough floatation to adequately support the weight of the line & line weights. It is normal for the buoy/float to duck under water during a swell.
  - Too much floatation and your trap will walk (move) along the bottom with the swell. This makes it hard for the crab to enter the trap and how pots are commonly lost.

Tools for braiding rope:

1) Knife
2) Torch
3) Lighter
4) Pliers
5) Wire Cutter
6) Scissor
7) Fid
8) Masking Tape



1) After cutting your rope to length, melt the end to keep it from fraying.
2) To keep the rope from unraveling while braiding, measure 6”-8” from the end of the rope and wrap with Masking Tape.
3) Unravel the 3 strands on the rope.







4) Create a loop and identify the start point where the tape intersects the main rope.



5) Insert the Fid under one of the strands on the rope and insert the middle tag strand.



6) Next, identify the strand directly behind the middle tag strand.



7) Carefully insert the fid and insert the left tag strand.

8) Next, Identify the strand on the main rope directly in front of the middle tag strand, insert the fid and feed the right tag strand thru it.

9) After tightening each tag strand, you should have 3 equally spaced tag strands.







10) Repeat the process 3-4 more times, tightening the tag strands after each round of braiding.

11) You should end up with a braid similar to the picture.

12) Cut the excess tag end leaving about 3/8” exposed.







13. Melt the end to keep it from fraying; while the end is still hot, use the fid to flatten the end flush with the rope.
14. Congratulations! You just braided your first line! Now, do the other end of the rope
15. Tip: Make one loop larger enough to be able to feed the entire coil thru it…







17. … this will allow you to be able to add and remove the coils (called “shots”) depending on the amount needed.
18. Braiding loops can also be used to make bridals for traps…
19. ring traps…
20. and even to finish of the end of you buoys; which make grabbing the line in the water a lot easier.

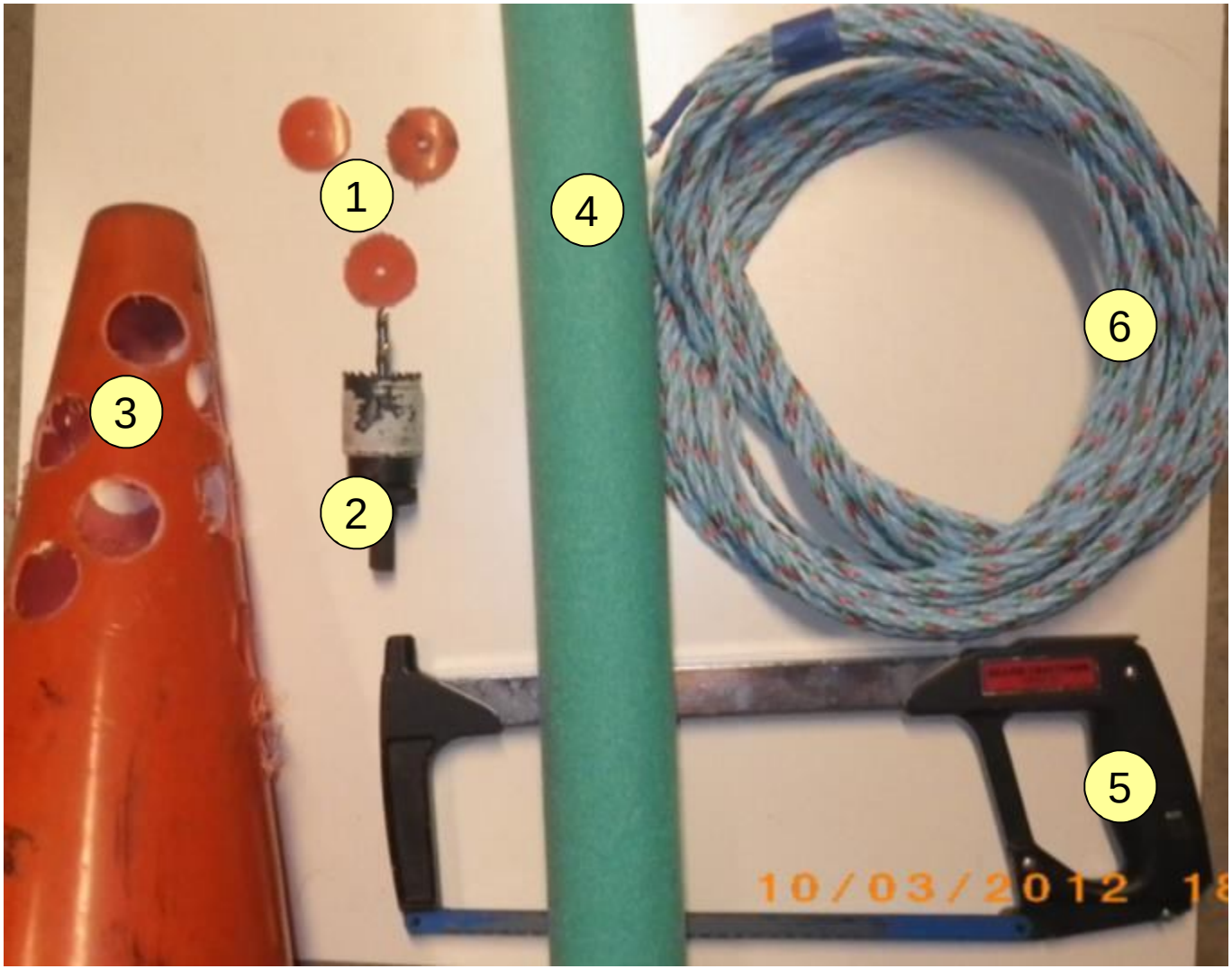








1. Buoy Washers
2. 2” Hole Saw
3. Orange Cone
4. Pool Noodle
5. Hacksaw.
6. Polypro Rope



- After cutting the pool noodle to your desired length, feed the rope thru a plastic washer and thru the pool noodle; feed another washer thru the rope and tie a loop knot. Tie another knot on the other end of the pool noodle/washer to keep it from shifting on the rope.
- Hint: the plastic washer prevent the knot from chaffing against the pool noodle when moving around in the water.
- If you need more floatation, you can use the same method with the large foam buoys.
- While I don't recommend it, you can use a plastic jug.







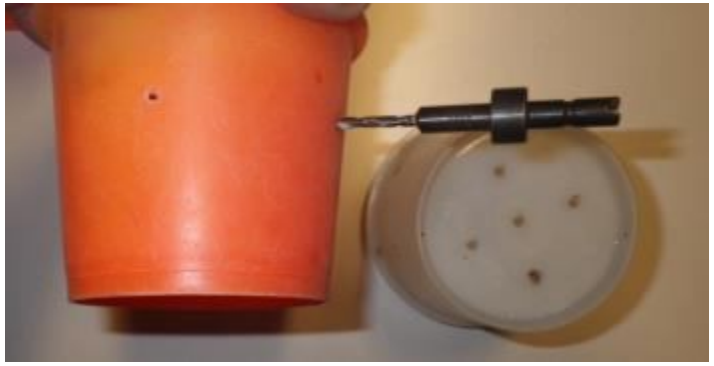
1) Sandwich Ziplock Bag
2) 1qt Paint Cup
3) Scotty Bait Jar (Vented)
4) Scotty Bait Jar (Non-Vented)
5) Scotty Lid



I prefer using bait jars in crab traps vs hanging bait; hanging bait tends to keep the smaller crabs in the pot feeding on the carcass. Small crabs to tend to leave if there is nothing to feed on and the larger crabs gets trapped.

1) If you are not using the pre-vented bait jars, use a 1/8” drill bit to put holes in the jar. Warning: using to big of a drill bit will allow “sand fleas” to enter the jar and eat your bait.





2) The 1qt paint cup is almost the same dimensions as the bait jar.



When selecting the type of bait, you should a protein based one, high in oil content. I prefer a Sardine (or Anchovies) & Squid; which I mince or

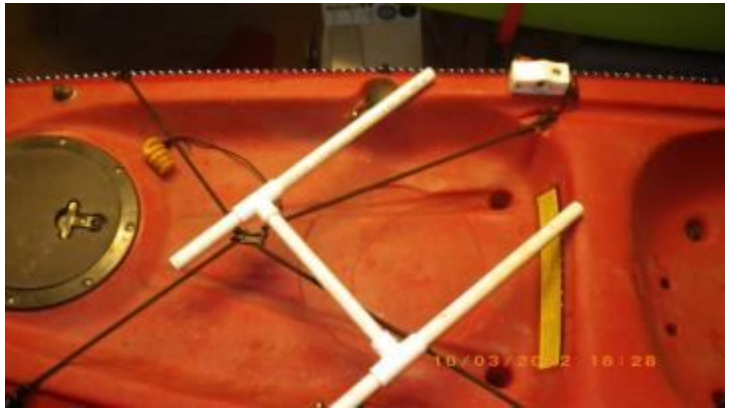


chop before re-freezing. I use a ziplock bag, which is placed in the paint cup and fill it with the bait mix and freeze it. With this frozen “baitsicle”, you don’t waste washing away all the bait’s scent while the pot is dropped in the water.

When it’s time to bait your jars, unzip the bag, remove the frozen bait and place it in the bait jar; no mess, no hassle.

- Using ½” PVC elbows (2) and 4’ of PVC pipe, you can make a simple rack to keep your pots from shifting while transporting.
- Cut the PVC pipe and use the elbows to make a miniature field goal post.
- Insert the “H” bracket into the scupper holes.





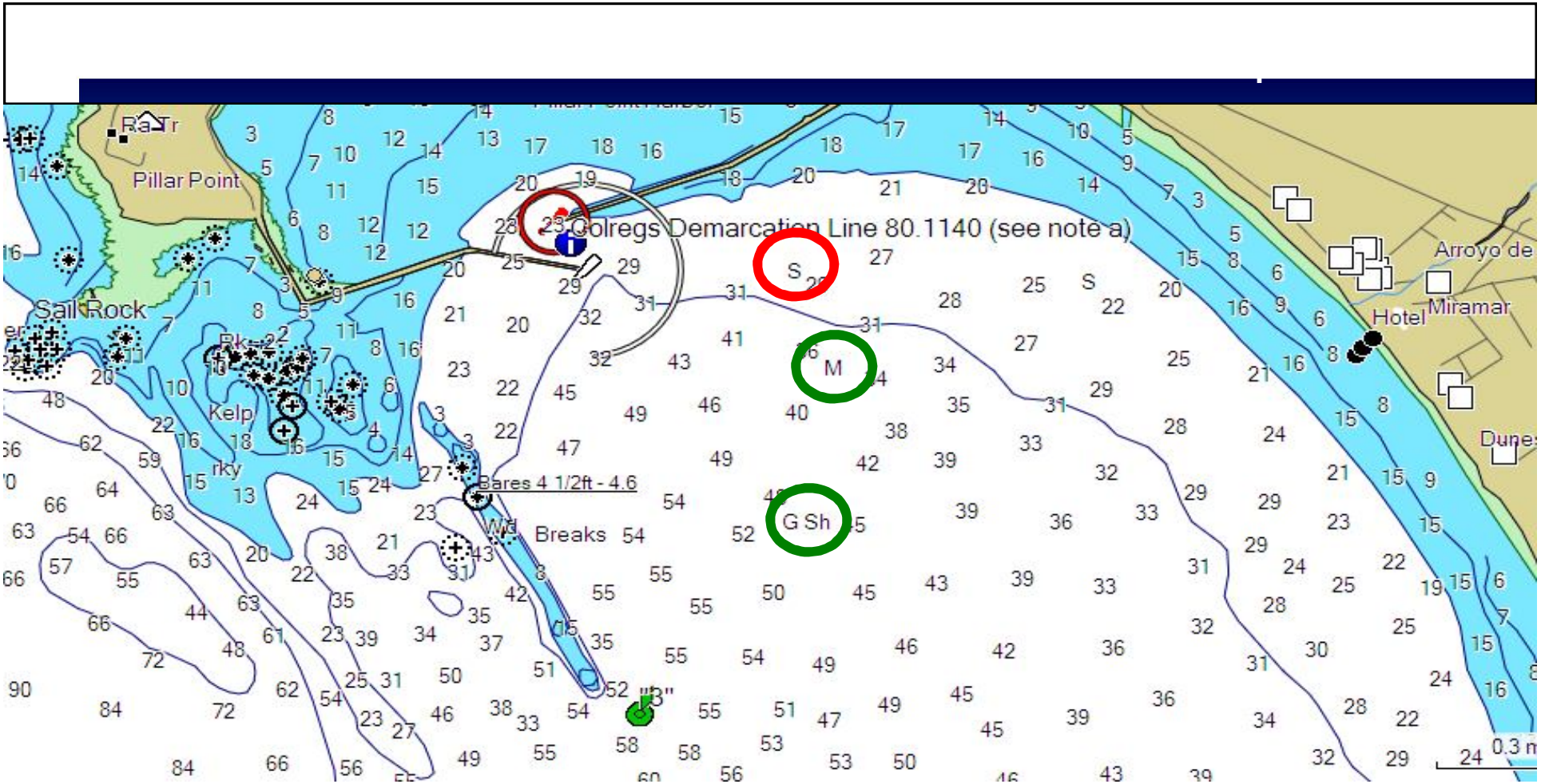


- Place the traps on the on the kayak; be carefully when putting the PVC thru the traps, you don't want to tear the netting.
- Hint: when transporting the traps on the water, make sure you have your ropes and buoys pre-coiled for deployment on the outside of the traps; if your trap accidentally fall over-board, the buoy will float to the surface and you can retrieve you trap. If you leave the rope inside the trap and it falls over-board, your' S.O.L.

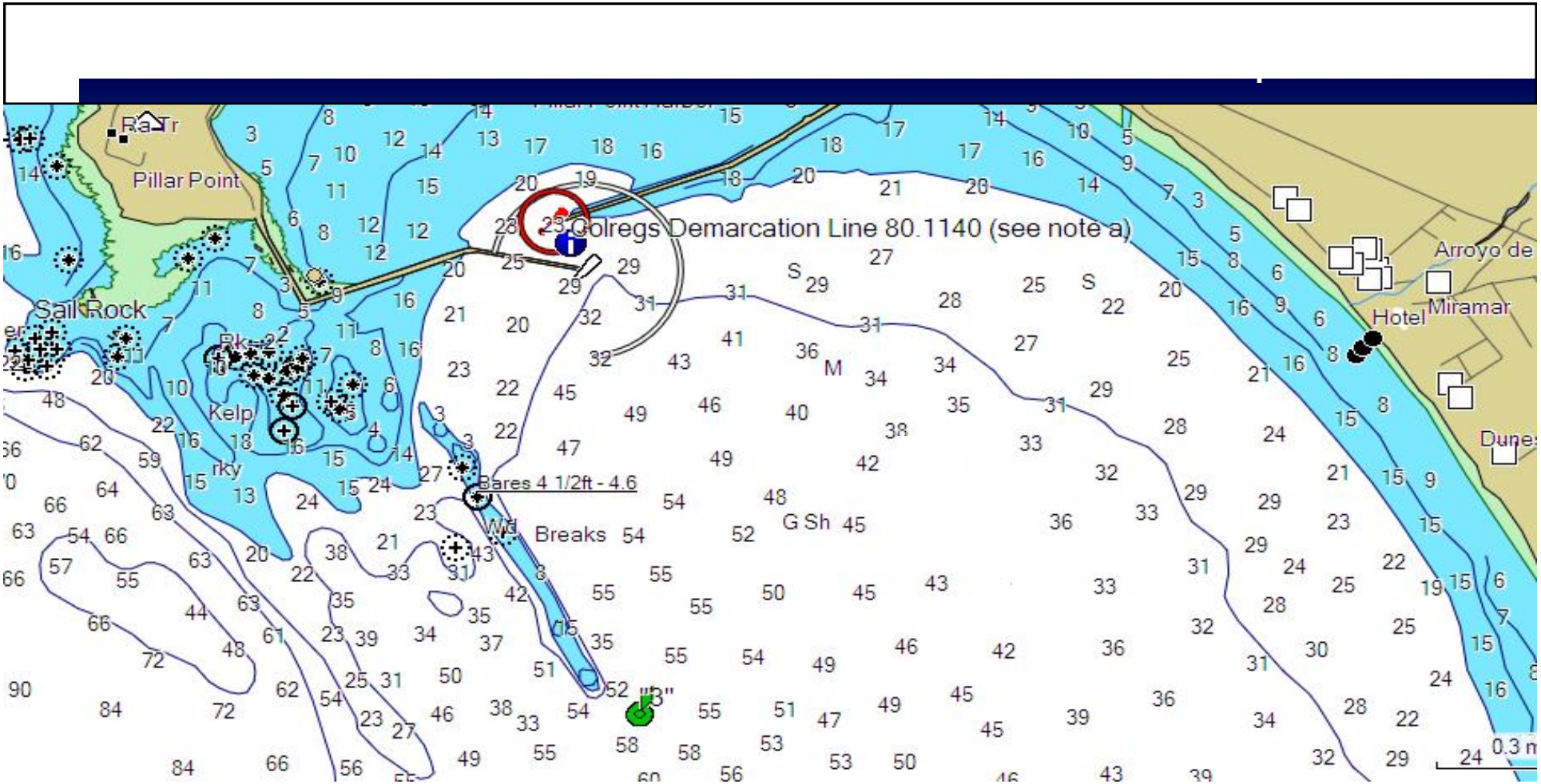




- Research the Area
  - Do not set you pots in the boating lanes.
  - Don’t set your pots to close to rockwalls, breakers or reefs; Rock crabs and Dungies don’t play well together. If you get unwanted Rock crabs in your trap, move it further away from the from any rocks, rockwalls or reefs.



- Research the Area – cont’d
  - Mud and Gravel are great spots to set your traps.
  - Sandy bottoms are okay, as long as they are not to close to rocky areas .



- Research the Area – cont’d
  - Set you traps in a row (called a “string”).
  - To make locating your traps, using a GPS to make the location where you dropped your pots.

- While there is no really right or wrong method to dropping your trap, but I found out that you have less chance of tangles in trap line if you release the buoy first, releasing rope as you drift/paddle and then drop the trap once the rope is fully deployed.
- If there is a tangle in the rope, it is easier to un-tangle it by simply pulling the rope/buoy back in.
- If you drop the pot first and you have a tangle in the rope, the weight of the trap when pulling it back in will tighten the knot; plus, now you have just wasted some of the bait's scent by dropping the trap in the water and then having to re-drop it.

- Ring/Hoop Nets – with Ring nets, there is no way to prevent the crabs from exiting the net once they had there fill of bait; therefore I recommend checking the ring/hoop nets every 15-20 minutes. Don’t forget to check your bait before redeploy the net to make sure that it is still secure and wont be stripped by larger predators.
- Crab Traps - while there is regulation on how long you can leave your crab traps in the water unchecked, I let my traps soak as long as possible and pull them up at the end of the trip; unlike the ring/hoop nets, once a legal size crab enters the trap, it is usually stuck there until you retrieve the trap.

- There are two methods of handling/pickup a dungie:
  - One is to grab the crab from the rear; making sure the your fingers on the underside of the crab extend pass the 3rd legs from the rear, where the crab can still reach with his claws.
  - The other way to hold a crab is to grab the rear 2 legs of the crab; and carefully squeeze them together, without dislocating it from the body.
  - Tip: Avoid over handling the crabs once the are out of the water and in your burlap sack or cooler; they are extremely aggressive and will claw/pinch at anything within reach, including breaking off the legs and/or claws of other crabs.
  - Tip #2: Don't mix Red or Rock Crabs with Dungies; they will fight and most likely the dungie will suffer the most damage.





- If you are not going to be cooking you catch right away, you can store them alive in a cooler with an ice pack (not with ice) and a rag/towel soaked with sea water, and it will keep them alive for a couple of hours.
- Place your crabs at the bottom of the cooler, taking care not to over handle them when doing so; they tend to get very aggressive towards each other when irritated. Transfer a couple at a time, then cover/close the cooler for a few minutes to let them calm down and then add a few more. The darkness in the cooler tends to calm them down. Once all the crabs are in the cooler, place the rag soaked with sea water over them and then put the ice pack on top of the rag.
- Tip: Do not use regular ice; the water from the melting ice will drown the bottom crabs.
- **Important: You do not want to cook/eat any crabs that are not alive. If there is no movement in the crab, there legs have gone limp and/or they are foaming at the mouth, discard the crab; poisonous toxins start to build up in the crab immediately when they die.**

- Cleaning Crab:
  - To clean a crab before cooking, turn the crab on its back and rest a clever on the middle body of the crab. With a small wood or mallet, strike the clever and split the crab. Remove the gills and innards (guts) of the crab, and rinse the crab in cold water; be sure to store the cleaned crab on ice until all your crab is clean and ready to be cooked. You can cut the sections in quarters, but some of the meat tend to all out when bbq'ing; I cook the sections first, then cut them in quarters.
- BBQing Cleaned crab (on coals, not a propane grill)
  - Season the crab section with your favorite herbs and spices; I use:
    - I first put a dash of olive oil on the body of the crab, this gives the spice something to stick too. Then I put sprinkle fresh ground seasalt, garlic powder, ginger powder and fresh ground pepper. And lastly, I squeeze fresh lemon over the whole batch.
    - Once the crabs are on the BBQ, I let them cook for on each side for about 8-10 minutes, basting them every couple of minutes.
      - » Basting ingredients: 1 stick of melted butter, 6 cloves of minced garlic and fresh squeezed lemons.
    - When cooked, (you will notice the crab meat start to separate), cut the half section in quarters, pre-crack the leg sections and serve.

- Steaming Cleaned crab (not boiling)
  - Clean the crabs as mentioned above.
  - In a medium/large pot, pour about one inch of water (or sea water) in the bottom and spice to taste.
    - I use fresh sliced ginger, powdered ginger, fresh smashed garlic, whole black pepper and fresh ground seasalt.
  - Hint: Don't put the crab sections in the pot until it has come to a full boil. If you do, you will end up with over cooked crab sections on the bottom when the top crab sections are fully cooked.
  - Once the water is boil and the pot starts to steam, carefully add the crab section into the pot so it does not splash on you; and close the lid.
  - Once the pot boils and the goes to FULL stream, I cook it for 15 minutes; that's it! You don't want to over cook your precious catch.
  - Carefully remove the crab section from the pot and let them rest on a clean rack to cool. Once cooled to room temperature, you can place them on a bed of ice to chill down.
  - To serve, drain the water from the pan (add more ice if necessary), arrange nicely with cut some lemon wedges on the tray and serve.

- Steaming Whole crab (not boiling)
  - Clean the crab by brushing them with a stiff brush to loosen the dirt, then briefly rinsing it under cold water to wash it off. Do not rinse the crab under running water for a long period of time, you will drown and kill the crab before it is time to cook it.
  - In a large pot, pour about one inch of water (or sea water) in the bottom and spice to taste.
    - I use fresh sliced ginger, powdered ginger, fresh smashed garlic, whole black pepper and fresh ground seasalt.
  - Place the one crab it to the pot back side down, cover the pot and let the crab calm down; then add another by repeating the process until the pot is full. *(Some may consider this a cruel away to cook them because they think the crabs suffer more as the pot starts to boil; but this way, you can fit more crabs in the pot and there is less of a chance the crabs will be missing legs.)*
  - Once the pot boils and the goes to FULL stream, I cook it for 18 minutes; that's it! You don't want to over cook your precious catch.
  - Turn off the pot, carefully remove the crab pot and place them in a bucket of ice water to immediate cool them down and stop the cooking.
  - Once cooled, place them right-side up on the table or counter to let any excess water drain from the crab; and serve or store in an ice filled cooler for enjoyment later.

- Crab Traps & Supplies
  - Promar (866) 264-2562
    - promarnets.com
  - Outdoor Pro Shop (707) 588-8033
    - Outdoorproshop.com
  - Fisherman's Warehouse (800) 237-3511
    - fishermanswarehouse.com
  - Ly's Fishing Tackle (408) 573-7566
    - lysfishinggoods.com
  - Seattle Marine & Fishing Supply (800) 426-2783
    - seamar.com
- Links
  - **http://coastsidefishingclub.com/drupal/?q=node/view/54**
  - **http://www.westernboatshop.com/crab-live-fresh-dungenuss-dungenous-san-francisco-techniques.htm**
  - **http://www.scod.com/cities/crabs/crabbing.html**

The End