

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment



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Edmund G. Brown Jr.
Governor

MEMORANDUM

TO: Charlton H. Bonham, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
1416 Ninth Street, 12th Floor
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FROM: Lauren Zeise, Ph.D. 
Acting Director

DATE: November 7, 2016

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION ON CLOSURE OR DELAY OF OPENING OF
COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY NORTH OF POINT
REYES AND CLOSURE OF THE COMMERCIAL ROCK CRAB FISHERY
NORTH OF PIGEON POINT

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), recommends that the commercial Dungeness crab fishery in state waters north of Point Reyes, Marin County (38° 00' N Latitude) be closed or the opening delayed, based on a finding of elevated levels of domoic acid in the viscera of some crabs collected from these areas. Additionally, we recommend that the commercial rock crab fishery north of Pigeon Point, San Mateo County (37° 11' N Latitude) be closed.

These determinations are based on data from sampling of Dungeness and rock crab taken from California waters and analysis of these samples by CDPH laboratories.

Current federal action levels for domoic acid are 20 parts per million (ppm) for all fish, with the exception of 30 ppm in the viscera of Dungeness crabs. OEHHA and CDPH are using the 30 ppm action level for rock crab viscera. State and federal laws prohibit the commercial distribution of seafood products that contain domoic acid levels above the action level. Available data in Dungeness crabs collected in the past month from the California coast north of Point Reyes show that domoic acid levels in viscera have reached as high as 74 ppm. The most recent samples of rock crabs taken from north of Pigeon Point have shown domoic acid levels in viscera up to 110 ppm. The sampling results for Dungeness and rock crab caught in state waters are provided in the table

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below. Data for all samples of Dungeness and rock crab caught south of these areas do not show elevated domoic acid levels (data not shown in table).

Domoic acid poisoning in humans may occur within minutes to hours after consumption of affected seafood and can result in signs and symptoms ranging from vomiting and diarrhea to permanent loss of short-term memory (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning), coma, or death.

CDFW, CDPH, and OEHHA are continuing to monitor and analyze Dungeness and rock crab to determine when the crab fisheries in these areas can safely be opened.

If you have questions, please contact me at Lauren.Zeise@oehha.ca.gov or (916) 322-6325.

Dungeness Crab Sampling Results

PORT	AREA	SAMPLE COLLECTION DATE	NUMBER OF SAMPLES	VISCERA SAMPLE RESULTS: RANGE	AVERAGE LEVEL IN VISCERA	SAMPLES EXCEEDING ACTION LEVEL (30 ppm in viscera)
Crescent City	North	9/14/16	6	6.7-53 ppm	19 ppm	17%
Trinidad	South	9/16/16	6	5.9-33 ppm	17 ppm	17%
Eureka	Samoa	9/16/16	6	8.2-20 ppm	14 ppm	0%
	Eel River	9/15/16	6	<2.5-29 ppm	14 ppm	0%
Fort Bragg	Usal	9/16/16	6	<2.5-64 ppm	17 ppm	17%
	Usal	10/11/16	6	7.3-74 ppm	33 ppm	33%
Bodega Bay	Point Reyes	9/9/16	6	<2.5-16 ppm	6 ppm	0%
	Russian River	9/10/16	6	4-60 ppm	21 ppm	17%
	Russian River	9/26/16	6	8-29 ppm	19 ppm	0%
	Russian River	10/12/16	6	<2.5-71 ppm	17 ppm	17%
	Bodega Head	10/12/16	6	<2.5-40 ppm	15 ppm	33%
	Bodega Head	10/27/16	6	<2.5-51 ppm	18 ppm	17%
	Russian River	10/27/16	6	5.4-51 ppm	18 ppm	17%
Half Moon Bay/San Francisco	Pillar Point	9/9/16	6	<2.5-20 ppm	4 ppm	0%
	Pigeon Point	10/7/16	6	4.5-24 ppm	11 ppm	0%

Rock Crab Sampling Results

PORT	AREA	SAMPLE COLLECTION DATE	NUMBER OF SAMPLES	VISCERA SAMPLE RESULTS: RANGE	AVERAGE LEVEL IN VISCERA	SAMPLES EXCEEDING ACTION LEVEL (30 ppm in viscera)
Eureka	Humboldt Bay	8/23/16	5	Non-detectable	Non-detectable	0%
	Humboldt Bay	9/13/16	3	Non-detectable	Non-detectable	0%
Half Moon Bay/San Francisco	Pillar Point	7/31/16	6	17-48 ppm	32 ppm	33%
	Pillar Point	8/7/16	6	28-320 ppm	116 ppm	67%
	Pillar Point	9/5/16	6	<2.5-17 ppm	6 ppm	0%
	Bonita Cove	9/6/16	6	17-91 ppm	49 ppm	50%
	Point Diablo	9/6/16	6	<2.5-44 ppm	17 ppm	17%
	Pillar Point	9/25/16	6	<2.5-110 ppm	29 ppm	33%