

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
Sacramento, California 95814

FROM: Lauren Zeise, Ph.D. 
Acting Director

DATE: December 1, 2016

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION ON OPENING OF DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY
IN STATE WATERS BETWEEN POINT REYES (38° 00' N Latitude) AND
38° 34.5' N LATITUDE (NEAR SALT POINT)

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) has determined, in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), that consumption of Dungeness Crab taken from state waters north from Point Reyes, Marin County (38° 00' N Latitude) to 38° 34.5' N (near Salt Point) no longer poses a significant threat for domoic acid exposure. This determination is based on data from repeated sampling of Dungeness Crab taken from California waters and analysis of these samples by CDPH laboratories.

The commercial Dungeness Crab fishery south of 40° 46.15' N Latitude (the north jetty at the Humboldt Bay entrance) to 38° 34.5' N should remain closed.

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.

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. State and federal laws prohibit the commercial distribution of seafood products that contain domoic acid levels above the action level. In contrast to levels seen earlier, concentrations of domoic acid in recent viscera samples of Dungeness Crab from 38° 00' N Latitude to 38° 34.5' N did not test above the action level of 30 ppm. As such, OEHHA recommends the opening

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of the commercial Dungeness Crab fishery in this area in a manner consistent with the emergency regulations adopted on November 15, 2016. The sampling results for Dungeness Crab caught in state waters from Point Reyes to the Oregon border are provided in the table on pages 3 and 4.

While CDPH and OEHHA concur that Dungeness Crab taken from this area are safe to consume, as a precaution and a best preparation practice, CDPH and OEHHA recommend that consumers should avoid eating the viscera (internal organs, also known as “butter” or “guts”) of crabs, as the viscera usually contain much higher levels of domoic acid than the meat.

CDFW, CDPH, and OEHHA are continuing to monitor and analyze Dungeness 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%
	South	11/1/16	6	<2.5-8.8 ppm	5 ppm	0%
	North	11/1/16	6	<2.5-14 ppm	7 ppm	0%
Trinidad	South	9/16/16	6	5.9-33 ppm	17 ppm	17%
	South	11/2/16	6	<2.5-7.6 ppm	4 ppm	0%
	North	11/1/16	6	<2.5-25 ppm	9 ppm	0%
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%
	Usal	11/12/16	6	3.8-50 ppm	27 ppm	50%
	Pt. Arena	11/12/16	6	8-47 ppm	26 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%

PORT	AREA	SAMPLE COLLECTION DATE	NUMBER OF SAMPLES	VISCERA SAMPLE RESULTS: RANGE	AVERAGE LEVEL IN VISCERA	SAMPLES EXCEEDING ACTION LEVEL (30 ppm in viscera)
Bodega Bay	Bodega Head	11/3/16	6	<2.5-65 ppm	13 ppm	17%
	Russian River	11/3/16	6	Non-detectable	Non-detectable	0%
	Bodega Head	11/10/16	6	5.5-14 ppm	9 ppm	0%
	Russian River	11/10/16	6	3.2-11 ppm	8 ppm	0%
	Bodega Head	11/26/16	6	<2.5-11 ppm	4 ppm	0%
	Salt Point	11/26/16	6	<2.5-26 ppm	7 ppm	0%