

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment



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Edmund G. Brown Jr.
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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. 
Director

DATE: January 25, 2017

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO OPEN THE COMMERCIAL ROCK CRAB FISHERY BETWEEN PIGEON POINT (37° 11' N LATITUDE) AND PILLAR POINT (37° 30' N LATITUDE) IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) has determined, in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), that consumption of rock crab taken from state waters in San Mateo County north of 37° 11' N Latitude (near Pigeon Point) to 37° 30' N (near Pillar Point) no longer poses a significant threat for domoic acid exposure. This determination is based on data from repeated sampling of rock crab and analysis of these samples by CDPH laboratories. OEHHA is therefore recommending the opening of this portion of the commercial rock crab fishery.

The commercial rock crab fishery north of Pillar Point in San Mateo County (specifically north of 37° 30' N Latitude) to the Oregon border 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. 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. In contrast to levels seen earlier, concentrations of domoic acid in recent viscera samples of rock crab from 37° 11' N Latitude to 37° 30' N Latitude did

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not exceed the action level of 30 ppm. As such, OEHHA recommends the opening of the commercial rock crab fishery in these areas in a manner consistent with the emergency regulations adopted on November 15, 2016. The sampling results for rock crab caught in state waters are provided in the table below.

While CDPH and OEHHA concur that rock crab taken from this area are safe to consume, CDPH and OEHHA recommend as a best-preparation practice 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 rock crab to determine when the crab fisheries north of Pillar Point can be opened safely.

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

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%
Bodega Bay	Bodega Bay	12/12/16	6	5.2 - 49 ppm	19 ppm	17%
	Bodega Bay	1/6/17	6	4.8 - 23 ppm	12 ppm	0%
	Point Reyes	1/16/17	6	<2.5 ppm - 39	7 ppm	17%
	Bodega Bay	1/18/17	6	Non-detectable	Non-detectable	0%
Half Moon Bay/SF	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%
	Pillar Point	11/27/16	6	<2.5 - 71 ppm	14 ppm	17%
	Pillar Point	12/31/16	6	<2.5 - 24 ppm	9 ppm	0%
	Pillar Point	1/14/17	6	<2.5 - 9.9 ppm	2 ppm	0%
Monterey	Monterey Bay	8/6/16	6	<2.5 - 84 ppm	27 ppm	33%
	Monterey Bay	9/14/16	4	<2.5 - 20 ppm	9 ppm	0%
	Monterey Bay	10/13/16	6	Non-detectable	Non-detectable	0%
Morro Bay	Avila	8/13/16	6	7.7 - 30 ppm	17 ppm	0%