

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.
Director 

DATE: March 29, 2018

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO OPEN THE COMMERCIAL ROCK CRAB
FISHERY BETWEEN SALT POINT AND THE SONOMA/MENDOCINO
COUNTY LINE

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 Sonoma County north of 38° 34' N Latitude (near Salt Point) to the Sonoma/Mendocino County Line (Latitude 38° 46.1' N, near Gualala) no longer poses a significant threat for domoic acid exposure. OEHHA and CDPH recommend that this portion of the commercial rock crab fishery be opened. This determination is based on data from sampling of rock crab and analysis of these samples by CDPH laboratories.

OEHHA recommends that the commercial rock crab fishery closure remain in effect in state waters north of the Sonoma/Mendocino County Line (Latitude 38° 46.1' N, near Gualala) to the Oregon border until such time as samples show that the remaining closed area can be opened safely.

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

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the commercial distribution of seafood products that contain domoic acid levels above the action level. The sampling results for rock crab caught in state waters are provided in the table below.

While the recreational fishery remains open, CDPH and OEHHA strongly recommend that consumers avoid eating the viscera (internal organs, also known as “butter” or “guts”) of lobster or crabs, as the viscera usually contain much higher levels of domoic acid than the meat.

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)
Bodega Bay	Russian River	7/23/17	6	<2.5-18 ppm	6 ppm	0%
	Salt Point	7/23/17	4	Non-detectable	Non-detectable	0%
	Russian River	8/8/17	5	<2.5-50 ppm	10 ppm	20%
	Salt Point	8/8/17	5	<2.5-2.7 ppm	0.5 ppm	0%
	Russian River	9/12/17	6	<2.5-9.2 ppm	3.9 ppm	0%
	Salt Point	9/12/17	6	<2.5-7.1 ppm	3.7 ppm	0%
	Russian River	12/20/17	6	<2.5-7.4 ppm	1.2 ppm	0%
	Russian River	12/28/17	6	<2.5-14 ppm	3.3 ppm	0%
	Black Point	3/7/18	6	<2.5-12.0	2.5 ppm	0%