




Lauren Zeise, Ph.D., Director
Matthew Rodriguez, Secretary for Environmental Protection
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: November 9, 2018

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO DELAY THE OPENING OF THE
COMMERCIAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY FROM THE SOUTHERN
BOUNDARY OF BODEGA HEAD STATE MARINE RESERVE IN
SONOMA COUNTY TO THE SONOMA/MENDOCINO COUNTY LINE

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), recommends that the opening of the commercial Dungeness crab fishery be delayed in state waters from the southern boundary of Bodega Head State Marine Reserve in Sonoma County (38° 18' N. latitude) north to the Sonoma/Mendocino County line (38° 46.125' N. latitude). This recommendation is based on a finding of elevated levels of domoic acid in the viscera of some Dungeness crab that were collected from this area and analyzed by CDPH laboratories, as shown in the table below.

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.

CDPH and OEHHA recommend as a best preparation practice that consumers avoid eating the viscera (internal organs, also known as “butter” or “guts”) because they 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 commercial crab fishery between the southern boundary of Bodega Head State Marine Reserve and the Sonoma/Mendocino County line can be opened safely.

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	TISSUE TYPE	SAMPLE RESULTS: RANGE	AVERAGE LEVEL	SAMPLES EXCEEDING ACTION LEVEL*
Bodega Bay	Point Reyes	9/28/2018	6	Viscera	< 2.5 -19 ppm	5 ppm	0%
	Bodega Head	9/28/2018	6	Viscera	5.8 - 40 ppm	17.3 ppm	17%
	Russian River	9/29/2018	6	Viscera	6.8 - 32 ppm	16.7 ppm	33%
	Salt Point	9/29/2018	6	Viscera	< 2.5 - 15 ppm	4 ppm	0%
	Bodega Head	10/20/2018	6	Viscera	< 2.5 – 31 ppm	11.9 ppm	17%
	Russian River	10/20/2018	6	Viscera	< 2.5 – 14 ppm	4.9 ppm	0%
	Bodega Head	10/27/2018	6	Viscera	< 2.5 – 30 ppm	11.4 ppm	0%
	Russian River	10/27/2018	6	Viscera	< 2.5 – 74 ppm	17.1 ppm	17%
	Bodega Head	11/3/18	6	Viscera	3.1 – 14 ppm	6 ppm	0%
	Russian River	11/3/18	6	Viscera	<2.5 – 14 ppm	3.4	0%

*The action level for viscera is 30 ppm.