

About Fisheries Closure

In the event of an oil spill, CDFW works closely with the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) to assess the need for temporarily closing fisheries to protect public health and to determine the appropriate boundaries, sampling plans, and reopening dates to maximize protection of public health while also avoiding unnecessary restrictions.

[Fish and Game Code, Section 5654](#) provides the Director of CDFW the authority to close the affected area to all fishing (commercial, recreational, and/or subsistence) and other fisheries activities when the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ([OEHHA](#)) finds a public health threat exists or is likely to exist.

California Fish and Game Code Section 5654 also establishes the timeline for a fisheries closure action after notification of an oil spill is received. The closure process, and the timeline, were updated in 2025 ([Senate Bill 839](#)) and the revisions took effect January 1, 2026.



Fisheries Closure Process Overview

Within 24 hours after spill notification:

- CDFW (OSPR) shall initiate consultation with OEHHA when the following criteria are met:
 - Reported volume of 1 or more barrels of oil into inland waters, estuarine waters, or enclosed bays; and/or
 - Reported volume of 1 or more barrels impacting coastal shorelines; and/or
 - Reported volume of 5 or more barrels into open ocean waters
- A fisheries closure is required if OEHHA finds a public health threat exists or is likely to exist.
- CDFW may consult with OEHHA regarding any oil spill of any volume to protect public health.

Within 48 hours after an oil spill-related fisheries closure:

- OEHHA, in consultation with CDFW, shall assess the danger to the public from fishing and consuming fish or shellfish in the area where the spill or discharge occurred or spread to, or that were contained in a potentially contaminated recirculating seawater tank.
- CDFW, in consultation with OEHHA, shall determine whether the initial fisheries closure boundaries should be revised.

Within 7 days after an oil spill-related fisheries closure:

- CDFW can re-open a closed area without seafood testing if OEHHA finds there is no significant risk to the public, or
- If significant risk exists, expedited testing of seafood must be ordered to determine the levels of contamination, if any, and whether the fish or shellfish are safe for human consumption. An incident-specific seafood sampling plan will be developed and will identify the target test species based on the [OEHHA Sampling & Analysis Plan](#) template.

For more information:

- See OEHHA's [Oil Spills and Seafood Fact Sheet](#) for details on seafood testing, laboratory analyses, and OEHHA's risk evaluation.
- View OEHHA's [flow charts](#) outlining the initial consultation, fisheries closure determination, and re-opening process.

Contact Information



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