



Gavin Newsom, Governor
Yana Garcia, Secretary for Environmental Protection
Lauren Zeise, Ph.D., Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Charlton H. Bonham, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
715 P Street
Sacramento, California 95814

FROM: Lauren Zeise, Ph.D. *Lauren Zeise 9/22/23*
Director

DATE: September 22, 2023

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO DELAY THE OPENING OF THE
COMMERCIAL LOBSTER FISHERY OFF THE COAST OF PORTIONS
OF LOS ANGELES AND ORANGE COUNTIES

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 spiny lobster fishery be delayed in state waters off the coast of portions of mainland Los Angeles and Orange counties. The specific area recommended to remain closed includes all state waters in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Fishing Blocks 718, 719, and 720.¹ This is delimited in terms of longitude and latitude, as follows:

- east of 118°30.00' W longitude and west of 118°0.00' W longitude,
- north of 33°40.00' N latitude and south of 33°50.00' N latitude.

State waters extend three nautical miles out from the coastline. This recommendation is based on a finding of elevated levels of domoic acid in the viscera and roe of lobsters that were collected from this area and analyzed by CDPH laboratories. A table presenting the results of domoic acid sampling and analysis from the impacted areas is shown 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

¹ Online at: https://apps.wildlife.ca.gov/MarineLogs/Content/Cpfv/images/south_fishing_blocks.jpg.

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diarrhea to permanent short-term memory loss (amnesic shellfish poisoning), coma, or death.

Current federal action levels for domoic acid are ≥ 20 parts per million (ppm) for all fish and shellfish, with the exception of > 30 ppm in the viscera of Dungeness crabs.

All other sections of the California coast will be open for recreational harvesting of spiny lobster. For all lobster taken from these areas, CDPH and OEHHA strongly recommend that consumers avoid eating the viscera (internal organs, also known as “butter” or “guts”) and roe (reproductive parts) of lobster because they usually contain much higher levels of domoic acid than the meat.

CDFW, CDPH, and OEHHA are continuing to monitor and analyze lobster to determine when the commercial spiny lobster fishery in state waters off the coast of mainland Los Angeles and Orange counties can be opened safely.

If you have questions, please contact me at Lauren.Zeise@oehha.ca.gov or Dr. Wesley Smith at Wesley.Smith@oehha.ca.gov.

Spiny Lobster Sampling Results

PORT	AREA	SAMPLE COLLECTION DATE	NUMBER OF SAMPLES	TISSUE TYPE	RANGE OF SAMPLE RESULTS (ppm)	AVERAGE DOMOIC ACID LEVEL (ppm)	SAMPLES EXCEEDING ACTION LEVEL*
Long Beach	Block 719	08/15/23	6	Viscera	< 2.5 – 190	48	67%
			6	Roe	11 – 60	27	33%
			6	Meat	2.7 – 14	6.5	0%
		08/31/23	6	Viscera	< 2.5 – 31	9.1	17%
			2	Roe	5.1 – 9.2	7.2	0%
			2	Meat	< 2.5	< 2.5	0%
		09/11/23	6	Viscera	< 2.5 – 28	9.4	17%
			1	Roe	n/a	9.2	0%
			6	Meat	< 2.5	< 2.5	0%
		09/18/23	6	Viscera	< 2.5 – 6.6	1.1	0%

* The action level for lobster is ≥ 20 ppm.
 n/a = not applicable due to a single sample

cc: Dr. Miren Klein
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