




Gavin Newsom, Governor
Yana Garcia, Secretary for Environmental Protection
David Edwards, Ph.D., Acting Director

MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: David Edwards, Ph.D. 
Acting Director David Edwards (Apr 23, 2025 09:48 PDT)

DATE: April 23, 2025

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO OPEN THE COMMERCIAL ROCK CRAB FISHERY IN PORTIONS OF HUMBOLDT AND DEL NORTE COUNTIES

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), has determined that consumption of rock crab taken from the north jetty of the Humboldt Bay entrance (40° 46.15' N. Lat.) to the California/Oregon border (42° 00.00' N. Lat.) (Humboldt and Del Norte counties), 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.

OEHHA recommends that the commercial rock crab fishery closure remain in effect in all waters from the Mendocino/Humboldt County line (40° 00.00' N. Lat.) to 40° 30.00' N. Lat. (near Cape Mendocino, Humboldt County) until such time as samples show that the closed areas can be opened safely.

For sections of the California coast where recreational harvesting of rock crab is permitted, OEHHA and CDPH continue to strongly recommend that consumers avoid eating the viscera (internal organs, also known as “butter” or “guts”) because the viscera usually contain much higher levels of domoic acid than the meat.

These recommendations are based on levels of domoic acid in the viscera of rock crab 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.

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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 and shellfish, except for > 30 ppm in the viscera of Dungeness crab. OEHHA and CDPH are applying 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.

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

David Edwards

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Rock Crab Sampling Results

PORT	COLLECTION SITE	SAMPLE COLLECTION DATES	NUMBER OF SAMPLES	TISSUE TYPE	SAMPLE RESULTS: RANGE	AVERAGE LEVEL **	% OF SAMPLES EXCEEDING ACTION LEVEL*
CRESCENT CITY	Block 108	3/24/25; 4/01/25	6	viscera	<2.5 – 3.7	1.0	0

*The action level for viscera is >30 ppm and for meat is ≥ 20 ppm.

** Non-detect (<2.5 ppm) included as zero in the calculation of the average.

cc: June Weintraub, Sc.D.
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