

## Staff Summary for August 13-14, 2025

**23C. Department Marine Region**

<b>Today's Item</b>	<b>Information</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Action</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
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Receive updates on items of note since the previous Commission meeting.

- I. *Pacific sardine*: Action taken by the Department director to lift the recreational and commercial take restrictions for Pacific sardine south of Point Conception to the U.S./Mexico border after notification that a health risk no longer exists.
- II. *Recreational razor clam*: Action taken by the Department director to re-open the recreational razor clam fishery in Del Norte County following a recommendation from state health state agencies that domoic acid no longer poses a significant threat.

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)****Background**

The Department's Marine Region is expected to provide verbal updates, including actions taken by the Department director related to Pacific sardine and recreational razor clam.

***Pacific Sardine***

Pursuant to California Fish and Game Code subdivision 5523(a)(2), this item is scheduled for public discussion of action taken by the Department director in the Pacific sardine fishery for human health and safety.

On May 9, 2025, state health agencies recommended restricting recreational take of Pacific sardines from the Southern California Bight for bait use only. The recommendation stems from domoic acid levels found in sardines collected and analyzed by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH); consuming them from this area poses a human health risk.

Following the health agencies' recommendation, the Department director took action to close commercial and recreational take of Pacific sardine for human consumption south of Point Conception to the U.S./Mexico border, pursuant to subdivision 5523(a)(1) of Fish and Game Code. Take of Pacific sardine for live bait remained permitted in both commercial and recreational fisheries, and the restriction did not apply to other finfish.

Subsequently, in June the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), in consultation with the California Department of Public Health, determined that consumption of Pacific sardines taken from the area south of Point Conception to the U.S./Mexico Border no longer posed a significant threat for domoic acid exposure, and issued a memo to that effect (Exhibit 1). The Department director reopened the area for fishing and the Department issued a press release announcing the reopening (Exhibit 2).

***Recreational Razor Clam***

The razor clam fishery was closed in Del Norte County in 2023 due to elevated levels of domoic acid. Pursuant to 5523(b)(1) of Fish and Game Code, the Department director reopened the fishery in July following a recommendation from OEHHA, in consultation with the California Department of Public Health, that the levels of domoic acid no longer posed a threat.

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The public is advised, however, that a bivalve shellfish health advisory for Del Norte County is in effect. The California Department of Public Health issued a health advisory warning on July 3, 2025, warning the public not to consume any sport-harvested bivalves due to dangerous levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning toxins. The Department issued a press release with details on these actions (Exhibit 3).

**Significant Public Comments (N/A)****Recommendation (N/A)****Exhibits**

1. [OEHHA memo, dated June 13, 2025](#)
2. [Department news release: \*Southern California Pacific Sardine Domoic Acid Restrictions Lifted\*, dated June 13, 2025](#)
3. [Department news release: \*Del Norte County Razor Clam Fishery Opens Under a Continuing Health Advisory for Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning\*, dated July 30, 2025](#)

**Motion (N/A)**



Gavin Newsom, Governor  
Yana Garcia, Secretary for Environmental Protection  
Kristina Thayer, Ph.D., Director

## MEMORANDUM

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

**FROM:** Kristina Thayer, Ph.D. Kristina Thayer  
Director [Kristina Thayer \(Jun 13, 2025 11:52 PDT\)](#)

**DATE:** June 13, 2025

**SUBJECT:** RECOMMENDATION TO REMOVE THE RESTRICTION ON THE  
RECREATIONAL TAKE OF PACIFIC SARDINES FROM WATERS OFF  
THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIGHT (MULTIPLE COUNTIES)

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), has determined that consumption of Pacific sardines taken from waters off the Southern California Bight no longer poses a significant threat for domoic acid exposure. The impacted area includes waters between Point Conception (34° 27' N. Lat.) and the California/Mexico border (Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties). OEHHA and CDPH recommend lifting the restriction that limited recreational take of Pacific sardines to bait use only. This recommendation is based on levels of domoic acid below the federal action level in the viscera and whole bodies of Pacific sardines collected from this area and analyzed by CDPH laboratories. A table presenting the results of domoic acid analysis in samples from the impacted areas is shown below.

Domoic acid poisoning in humans may occur within minutes to hours after consumption of contaminated 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  $\geq 20$  parts per million (ppm) for all fish and shellfish, except for  $> 30$  ppm in the viscera of Dungeness crab.

If you have questions, please contact me at [REDACTED] or Dr. Wesley Smith at [REDACTED].

### Pacific Sardine Sampling Results

PORT	COLLECTION SITE	SAMPLE COLLECTION DATES	TISSUE TYPE	DOMOIC ACID (ppm) <sup>a</sup>
SAN PEDRO	Block 829	5/22/25	viscera*	< 2.5
			viscera*	< 2.5
			whole body*	< 2.5
			whole body*	< 2.5
	Block 826	5/28/25	viscera**	< 2.5
			whole body**	< 2.5
	Block 807	5/30/25	viscera**	< 2.5
			whole body**	< 2.5

\*Composite sample of 5 individual fish.

\*\*Composite sample of 8 – 10 individual fish.

<sup>a</sup> The action level is  $\geq 20$  ppm.

cc: June Weintraub, Sc.D.  
Deputy Director, Center for Environmental Health  
California Department of Public Health  
1500 Capitol Avenue, Suite 520  
Sacramento, California 95814

Melissa Miller-Henson  
Executive Director  
California Fish and Game Commission  
715 P Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, California 95814



## California Department of **Fish and Wildlife**

**CDFW New:**

### **Southern California Pacific Sardine Domoic Acid Restrictions Lifted**

*June 13, 2025*



California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Director Charlton H. Bonham [has lifted the commercial and recreational take restrictions \(PDF\)\(opens in new tab\)](#) for human consumption of Pacific sardine in the Southern California Bight. This action comes after receiving recommendations ([commercial \(PDF\)\(opens in new tab\)](#) and [recreational \(PDF\)\(opens in new tab\)](#)) from state health agencies that Pacific sardine no longer pose a human health risk caused by domoic acid. In early May, [take of Pacific sardine was restricted to bait use only](#). Recent Pacific sardine samples collected in several locations within the region show concentrations of domoic acid to be below the federal action level. With this announcement, there are no longer human health risk restrictions for the take of Pacific sardine in the area south of Point Conception (34° 27.000' N. lat.) to the U.S./Mexico border.

Domoic acid is a potent neurotoxin produced by *Pseudo-nitzschia*, a naturally occurring single-celled marine alga, under certain ocean conditions. Domoic acid can accumulate in fish without the organism itself becoming ill. At low levels, domoic acid exposure can

cause nausea, diarrhea and dizziness in humans. At higher levels, it can cause persistent short-term memory loss, seizures and can in some cases be fatal.

A domoic acid bloom in Southern California was detected earlier this year and was associated with a significant number of marine mammal strandings that peaked along Southern California beaches in March. In addition to the Pacific sardine advisory, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued health advisories for the consumption of marine bivalves (e.g., mussels, scallops, and clams) in all Southern California coastal counties due to elevated levels of both domoic acid and paralytic shellfish poisoning. Since then, marine mammal stranding reports have declined and [CDPH website\(opens in new tab\)](#). An annual [statewide mussel quarantine issued by CDPH\(opens in new tab\)](#) remains in place for paralytic shellfish poisoning from May 1 until Oct. 31.

Fishery information regarding current closures or restrictions due to biotoxins is updated on CDFW's [fishery information and health advisories\(opens in new tab\)](#) website.

Domoic acid test results for Pacific sardine are posted on the [CDPH Domoic Acid\(opens in new tab\)](#) website under Analytical Data - Seafood. For questions regarding sampling and testing programs, including current test results, contact the [CDPH](#).

To get the latest information on current fisheries affected by domoic acid, call CDFW's **Domoic Acid Fishery Information Line** at (831) 649-2883.

For the latest consumption warnings, call the **California Department of Public Health's Biotxin information Line** at (510) 412-4643 or toll-free at (800) 553-4133.

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**Media Contacts:**

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[John Ugoretz](#), CDFW Marine Region, (562) 338-3068





# CDFW NEWS

July 30, 2025

**Media Contacts:**

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## Del Norte County Razor Clam Fishery Opens Under a Continuing Health Advisory for Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning

The Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) [has re-opened the recreational razor clam fishery in Del Norte County](#) following a [recommendation from state health agencies](#) that domoic acid no longer poses a significant threat.

While the razor clam fishery has reopened due to recent tests for domoic acid, the [bivalve shellfish health advisory for Del Norte County](#) issued by California Department of Public Health on July 3, 2025, warning consumers not to consume any sport-harvested bivalves (including razor clams, mussels, scallops, and clams, etc.) due to dangerous

levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) toxins remains in effect. The razor clam fishery remains closed in Humboldt County due to elevated levels of domoic acid.

The razor clam fishery was closed in Del Norte County due to elevated levels of domoic acid in November 2023. State health agencies have continued to monitor domoic acid levels in razor clams since the closure, but test results consistently showed elevated levels, exceeding the federal action level ( $\geq 20$  parts per million (ppm)). Clams collected in June and July 2025 from Crescent Beach, Del Norte County all had domoic acid concentrations lower than the federal action level, allowing the fishery to reopen. However, PSP toxicity caused by a different marine plankton species continues to be a concern. Testing for PSP and other toxins will continue. For the latest areas under health advisories issued by CDPH, please refer to their [Recreational Bivalve Shellfish Health Advisory Map](#), which includes recent bivalve testing data reports.

CDFW reminds clammers that the daily bag limit for razor clams is 20 and the first 20 clams dug must be retained regardless of size or condition. The fishery in odd-numbered years is open north of Battery Point, Crescent City in Del Norte County. Each person is required to keep a separate container for their clams and is not allowed to commingle their take with another person when digging and transporting clams to shore.

For more information, please refer to Section 29.20 Clams General and Section 29.45 for specific razor clam regulations that can be accessed from the [Ocean Sport Fishing Regulation Guide \(PDF\)](#).

For more information on any fishery closure information or health advisories, please visit <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Ocean/Health-Advisories>.

To get the latest information on current fishing season closures related to domoic acid, call CDFW's Domoic Acid Fishery Closure Information Line at (831) 649-2883.

For the latest consumption warnings, call the California Department of Public Health's Biotoxin information Line at (510) 412-4643 or toll-free at (800) 553-4133. For more information on the Annual Mussel Quarantine, please visit California Department of Public Health's FAQs:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/Shellfish/Annual-Mussel-Quarantine.aspx>

Currently, ongoing tsunami advisories across portions of the California coast may inhibit coastal access. For additional information related to active and ongoing tsunami advisories in California, please visit [U.S. Tsunami Warning Centers](#).

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