CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARD ASSESSMENT

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

MEMORANDUM

TO: Meghan Hertel, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
715 P Street
Sacramento, California 95814

FROM: Kristina Thayer, Ph.D.
Director

DATE: OCTOBER 30, 2026

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO DELAY THE OPENING OF THE RECREATIONAL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY IN BIOTOXIN MANGEMENT AREA C FROM CAPE MENDOCINO TO TEN MILE STATE MARINE RESERVE (HUMBOLDT AND MENDOCINO COUNTIES)

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), has determined that consumption of Dungeness crab taken from Biotoxin Management Area C in Humboldt and Mendocino counties poses a significant threat for domoic acid exposure. OEHHA, in consultation with CDPH, therefore recommends that the opening of the recreational Dungeness crab fishery be delayed in state waters from Cape Mendocino (40°10' N. latitude) south to Ten Mile State Marine Reserve (SMR) (39°33.3' N. latitude) (i.e., BMA C).

This recommendation is based on levels of domoic acid above the federal action level in the viscera and meat of Dungeness crab collected from this region and analyzed by state laboratories. A table presenting the results of domoic acid sampling and analysis in crab samples from the impacted area 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 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.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), CDPH, and OEHHA are continuing to monitor and analyze Dungeness crab to determine when the recreational Dungeness crab fishery in BMA C in Humboldt and Mendocino counties can be re-opened safely. For other sections of the coast that will be open for recreational harvesting of Dungeness crab, CDPH and OEHHA continue to strongly recommend 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.

OEHHA also strongly recommends that non-commercial shellfish harvesters continue to follow all CDPH marine biotoxin quarantines and health advisories, including those for Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) toxins.

If you have questions, please contact me at Kris.Thayer@oehha.ca.gov or Dr. Wes Smith at Wesley.Smith@oehha.ca.gov.

Kristina Thayer

Dungeness Crab Sampling Results

BIOTOXIN MANAGEMENT AREA (BMA)	PORT	COLLECTION SITE	SAMPLE COLLECTION DATE	NUMBER OF SAMPLES	TISSUE TYPE	SAMPLE RESULTS: RANGE DOMOIC ACID (ppm)	AVERAGE LEVELS DOMOIC ACID (ppm)	% OF SAMPLES EXCEEDING ACTION LEVEL *
C	Fort Bragg	Usal	10/20/26	6	Viscera	8.8 – 99	38	50%
				3	Meat	6.6 – 20	13	33%

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

cc: June Weintraub, Sc.D.
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