

Senator Mike McGuire, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Assemblymember Jim Wood, Committee Vice-Chair, are hosting a hearing “*The California Dungeness and Rock Crab Fishery: Public Health, Ocean Conditions and Maintaining a Strong Coastal Economy*”. The hearing will be focused on the delayed opening of the Dungeness crab and closure of the rock crab seasons and include public health issues, ocean conditions and the coastal fishing economy. A panel of experts will discuss the current status, ocean conditions, what to expect in the weeks ahead and impacts of the season delay. The hearing will be held Thursday December 3, 2015 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Steele Lane Community Center in Santa Rosa, California.

Background

According to the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) Domoic Acid Frequently Asked Questions](#), domoic acid is “a naturally occurring toxin that is related to a “bloom” of a particular single-celled plant called Pseudo-nitzschia. The conditions that support the growth of Pseudo-nitzschia are impossible to predict. Crustaceans, fish and shellfish are capable of accumulating elevated levels of domoic acid without apparent ill effects on the animals” but problems may occur when the shellfish are consumed by mammals.

Elevated levels of domoic acid in crustaceans, fish and shellfish pose a significant risk to the public if consumed. Domoic acid can be fatal to people if consumed in high doses. Symptoms of domoic acid poisoning can occur within 30 minutes to 24 hours after eating toxic seafood. In mild cases, symptoms may include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, headache and dizziness. In severe cases, the victim may experience trouble breathing, confusion, disorientation, cardiovascular instability, seizures, excessive bronchial secretions, permanent loss of short-term memory (a condition known as Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning), coma or death.

As a result of reports of elevated levels of domoic acid California public health and resource agencies tested crabs, fish and shellfish and reviewed information. The crab [tests](#) resulted in a [recommendation by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment \(OEHHA\)](#) to the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife \(CDFW\)](#) and the [California Fish and Game Commission F&GC](#) to delay and close crab fisheries to protect public health. Subsequently, [CDFW implemented](#) along with the [F&GC](#) delays and closures to the commercial and recreational Dungeness and rock crab seasons.

[F&GC passed emergency regulations](#) that describe potential opening of the recreational season. The [Dungeness Crab Task Force](#) provided [recommendations to CDFW](#) on testing protocols and the potential opening of all the crab seasons. In order to open the crab seasons or lift a closure for recreational and commercial fishing, OEHHA must provide a recommendation, after consultation with CDPH, that crab test below the [threshold for domoic acid](#) and are safe for the public to consume.

Additional information including links to: press releases, the agenda, latest information on crab/domoic acid, articles about the hearing, live stream links, and presenter biographies can be viewed at the [committee web site](#) under the [“hearings”](#) heading.