



~California Dungeness Crab Task Force~

<http://www.opc.ca.gov/2009/04/dungeness-crab-task-force/>

Date: January 11, 2015

To: Karen Smith, California Department of Public Health
Lauren Zeise, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
Charlton Bonham, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Michael Yaun, California Fish and Game Commission

Cc: California Dungeness Crab Task Force
Craig Shuman, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Susan Ashcraft, California Fish and Game Commission
Cat Kuhlman, Ocean Protection Council

From: Dungeness Crab Task Force Executive Committee

Re: Follow up from November 9, 2015 Dungeness Crab Task Force Executive Committee guidance memo regarding Dungeness crab domoic acid fishery impacts and next steps

The California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF) Executive Committee (Executive Committee) met via conference call on December 22, 2015 to resume discussing the issue of domoic acid in California Dungeness crab. As a follow up to the [November 9, 2015 memo](#), the Executive Committee respectfully submits the following guidance to continue to inform and advise the Department of Public Health, Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the Fish and Game Commission (collectively referred to as “the agencies”). The Executive Committee remains committed to working with the agencies to ensure a safe product is available for public consumption.

Public Health Disclaimer on Dungeness Crab Product

The California Dungeness crab industry is committed to waiting until the agencies make the determination that crabs are safe for public consumption (i.e., domoic acid testing \leq 30ppm alert level) before opening the commercial fishery. The Executive Committee opposes including any type of public health disclaimer related to the consumption of Dungeness crab once deemed safe to eat. This includes messaging advising consumers to eviscerate crab prior to cooking or to not consume any of the broth that a whole crab may have been cooked. Once the commercial fishing industry begins to bring California Dungeness crab into local and foreign markets there should be no need for any disclaimer, and the season should operate per usual. It will be important to create a strong sense of trust and security in the product once the commercial fishery opens.

Compensation of Fishermen Involved in Gathering Testing Samples

The DCTF Executive Committee suggests fishermen involved gathering testing samples be reimbursed for expenses via their local port associations. Reimbursement rates will be determined on a port-by-port basis, and 50% of the funding should be made available by the associations and the other 50% by crab processors. The DCTF Executive Committee also suggests that recreational fishermen and Commercial Fishing Passenger Vessel (CPFV) owner/operators also participate in collecting testing samples to and share the sampling responsibility with commercial fishermen.



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Opening Dungeness Crab Fisheries

The Executive Committee maintains that once domoic acid levels have fallen below health advisory levels, the preference is for the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery to be opened statewide (rather than by county, district, management area, etc.). The Executive Committee recognizes, however, that this is a fluid situation and it may provide updated guidance to the agencies following an anticipated January 2016 Executive Committee meeting. With this need for flexibility in mind, the Executive Committee understands the agencies' recent decision to open the recreational Dungeness crab fishery south of Piedras Blancas Light Station in accordance with the California Fish and Game Commission's action taken on November 5, 2015.

Opening in the Southern Range of the Fishery

During the December 22 call, CDFW shared with the Executive Committee that the agencies were considering opening the commercial and recreational red rock crab and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries south of Point Lopez. The Executive Committee discussed the small size of the sampling/test area for Morro Bay, as well as the over 65 miles between the southern most Morro Bay sampling site and northern most Santa Barbara sampling site. This discussion led the Executive Committee to suggest the agencies consider opening the fisheries at Point Conception instead of Point Lopez. Although the agencies have already made a decision on the matter (see the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife's press release on December 31, 2015](#)) this memo serves as a record that the Executive Committee expressed support for opening the commercial and recreational red rock crab and recreational Dungeness crab fisheries south of Point Conception.

Presoak

In a [recently released document](#), CDFW indicated the presoak period will be 64 hours in advance of the opening date of the season in Fish and Game Districts 6, 7, 8 and 9, and 18 hours in advance of the season in all other districts. The Executive Committee is concerned that once the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery reopens, there will be a "race" for crabs creating unsafe and potentially life-threatening conditions for fishermen. Due to these safety concerns, the Executive Committee suggests implementing a statewide 64-hour presoak period prior to the commercial opener(s). The Executive Committee requests CDFW reconsider its position and authority on this matter for the safety of the fishery participants.

DCTF Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is a subcommittee of the [DCTF](#) composed of a crab processor and commercial fishermen from Morro Bay, Half Moon Bay, San Francisco, Fort Bragg, Eureka, and Crescent City. There are no recreational or commercial passenger fishing vessel (CPFV) representatives on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee cannot make decisions on behalf of the full DCTF. However, due to the sensitive timing of this topic, on October 26, 2015 the Executive Committee was directed to provide guidance to the agencies on this topic. For more information about the Executive Committee and the DCTF please visit the DCTF webpage: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2009/04/dungeness-crab-task-force/>. Please direct any questions regarding this memorandum to the DCTF Administrative Team at info@dungenesscrabtaskforce.com or (805) 845-9852.