

## **NEWS RELEASE**

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

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### **State delays Dungeness crab season coastwide to ensure safe product**

NEWPORT, Ore. – The commercial Dungeness crab season along the Oregon coast normally opens Dec. 1, but can be delayed to ensure a safe and high-quality product to consumers. Testing of crab in recent weeks showed elevated levels of domoic acid in the southern half of the state. Based on these results and consultations with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), the Oregon commercial crab industry and Washington and California Departments of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is delaying the ocean commercial Dungeness crab season along the entire Oregon coast. This delay will allow completion of additional testing for domoic acid in order to provide confidence that crab harvested from Oregon waters are safe to consume. Oregon's commercial crab industry places a high priority on making sure that seafood consumers can be confident that they are buying a safe, high-quality, and sustainable product when they purchase Oregon Dungeness crab.

In the next couple of weeks, ODFW will be continuing to work closely with ODA, fishery managers from WA and CA and the Oregon commercial Dungeness crab industry to test crab in all areas as regularly as possible. Additional domoic acid test results are scheduled to be available by the end of the first week of December, and ODFW plans to evaluate options for opening the commercial season at that time.

Despite the delay, crab and shellfish products sold in retail markets and restaurants remain safe for consumers.

The recreational harvest of Dungeness crab in Oregon's bays and estuaries is currently closed south of Heceta Head due to elevated levels of domoic acid. Recreational harvest of crab in bays and estuaries north of Heceta Head remains open. The opening of the recreational crab harvest in the ocean off Oregon north of Heceta Head will be decided pending additional domoic acid test results next week.

Domoic acid or amnesic shellfish toxin can cause minor to severe illness and even death. Severe poisoning can result in dizziness, headaches, vomiting and diarrhea. More severe cases can result in memory loss and death. Shellfish toxins are produced by algae and originate in the ocean. Toxins cannot be removed by cooking, freezing or any other treatment. Removal of a health advisory for any area requires two rounds of consecutive tests in the safe range. For more information, call ODA's shellfish safety information hotline at (800) 448-2474 or visit the ODA shellfish closures web page at:

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/FoodSafety/Shellfish/Pages/ShellfishClosures.aspx>.

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