

Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture

Crab Hearing - April 28, 2016

Talking Points, California Dungeness Crab Task Force

Provided by Rachelle Fisher, Strategic Earth Consulting Senior Associate and DCTF Administrator

- My name is Rachelle Fisher and I serve as an Administrator of the California Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF).
- On behalf of the DCTF, thank you for the opportunity to reflect on a number of lessons learned based on the experiences shared by DCTF Members and the industry over the past six months as they deal with this unprecedented domoic acid issue.
- As you know, the DCTF and greater Dungeness crab industry is greatly concerned about the domoic acid situation, including the continued delay in the Dungeness crab fishery in the Northern Management Area, and has prioritized this topic as the highest management priority.
- The DCTF and its Executive Committee have been at the forefront of this conversation. Since October 2015, this issue has been discussed during a DCTF meeting and five Executive Committee conference calls.
 - The meeting and conference calls have provided a venue for CDFW, OPC, and the industry to engage in an open discussion, share information, provide updates, and discuss the domoic acid issue and disaster relief efforts. The conference calls also served as an opportunity for CDFW to respond to questions from the Executive Committee and greater Dungeness crab fleet, and get a pulse of the fleet's sentiments on season openers, testing protocols, etc.
 - All DCTF meetings and Executive Committee calls are open to the public. We have had more than 200 lines used during a given call, and public comment is a large component of the discussions.
- An outcome of these conference calls included guidance from the Executive Committee and industry leaders to CDFW, the public health agencies, and OPC on the industry's preferred approach to opening the commercial Dungeness crab fishery. Questions and considerations about sampling protocols and fisheries management (e.g. the need for observers on sampling vessels, 30ppm being an appropriate safety threshold, etc.) have also been generated by the Executive Committee and call participants.
- Reflecting on a number of lessons learned:
 - Having CDFW, OPC, Legislative staff, and Federal Congressional staff present on Executive Committee calls was extremely valuable. This involvement allowed the Executive Committee and call participants to ask questions, groundtruth rumors, and to receive updates directly from state and federal sources. Although the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) was unable to attend these calls due to scheduling conflicts, we hope they and other state representatives will continue to engage with the fleet and participate in these conversations to maintain open lines of communication.

- The DCTF email list served as an effective way to reach out to a large contingent of the fleet to share information and updates, as well as to help dispel rumors and misinformation. We would like to thank CDFW for responding to many questions and inquiries relayed by the fleet, and circulating Frequently Asked Questions and other information in a timely manner on the CDFW webpage and through the CDFW and DCTF email lists to help ensure correct information is widely available. Moving forward, we welcome the opportunity to brainstorm with CDFW, the public health agencies, and OPC about how to continue to improve communications and updates on domoic acid.
- While Executive Committee calls have provided a public forum for the broader fleet to get information and respond to the domoic acid issue, we did face a number of challenges. First, the DCTF is bound by the Bagley Keene Open Meetings Act, which requires a 10 day notice for any meeting. This limited the Executive Committee's ability to respond to information as it became available in real time. Also, funding constraints limited discussions regarding domoic acid to only the Executive Committee - ideally these discussions and subsequent guidance provided would have involved the full DCTF. Moving forward, the DCTF Administrative Team, informed by the work and continued exploration by the OPC Science Advisory Team (OPC-SAT) and others, hopes to investigate how we can be more strategic and proactive so that the full DCTF can be engaged in these broad-reaching issues.
- Moving forward, the DCTF, the Executive Committee, and much of the Dungeness crab industry continue to have lingering questions and concerns about the domoic acid situation. The Executive Committee has indicated they would like to work in close coordination with CDPH, CDFW, and OPC to help inform the development of testing protocols and scientific questions, and provide fisheries management guidance. There is also interest in working with the OPC-SAT to continue to inform the harmful algal bloom frequently asked questions (FAQ) document that is in development. We look forward to working with those agencies to discuss what role the DCTF can play in those efforts.
- On behalf of the DCTF, I would like to thank Senator McGuire and the Joint Committee for the opportunity to speak today.
- I am available if you have any questions.

For more information about the DCTF, including all meeting summaries and reports, please visit the DCTF webpage: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2009/04/dungeness-crab-task-force>. Or email info@dungenesscrabtaskforce.com.