

Entire Oregon Coast now closed to mussel harvesting

October 23, 2009... The Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife announce the closure of the entire Oregon Coast to recreational mussel harvesting, from the mouth of the Columbia River to the California border, due to elevated levels of paralytic shellfish toxins (PST).

The north and central coast had already been closed to mussel harvesting. The latest announcement includes closing the area from Bastendorf Beach near Charleston to the California border.

Coastal scallops are not affected by this closure when only the adductor muscle is eaten. The consumption of whole recreationally harvested scallops is not recommended. Crab and oysters are not affected by this level of toxin and are safe to eat. Razor clamming along the Oregon coast remains open.

Shellfish contaminated with PST can cause minor to severe illness or even death. The symptoms usually begin with tingling of the mouth and tongue. Severe poisoning can result in dizziness, numbness and tingling in the arms and legs, paralysis of the arms and legs, and paralysis of the muscles used for breathing. Shellfish contaminated with PST can cause minor to severe illness or even death. PST cannot be destroyed by cooking, by adding baking soda, or by any other method of processing.

Shellfish toxins are produced by algae and usually originate in the ocean. ODA will continue to test for shellfish toxins weekly, as tides permit. Reopening of an area requires two consecutive tests in the safe range.

For more information, call ODA's shellfish safety information hotline at (800) 448-2474, the Food Safety Division at (503) 986-4720 or visit the ODA shellfish closures Web page at http://oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/shellfish_status.shtml.