

UNIVERSITY

University researchers to help with last fall's toxic tide

By Fredrick Hagen
Emerald Contributor

A University biology professor says last fall's toxic tide that closed razor clam and dungeness crab fisheries in Oregon and Washington may be with us for a long time.

But with the proper research and monitoring, we can learn to live with it, said Lynda Shapiro, director of the University's Oregon Institute of Marine Biology.

The closures occurred in November after domoic acid was found in mice used to test for Paralytic shellfish poisoning or Red Tide.

Shapiro said the most likely cause of the poisoning is a type of phytoplankton — a single-cell algae that turns carbon dioxide into sugar and protein through photosynthesis.

Domoic acid producing phytoplankton caused the deaths of pelicans and other marine birds off California in September.

Three people were killed in Eastern Canada in 1987, and 100 experienced symptoms ranging from permanent memory loss to upset stomach in the first domoic acid poisoning reported.

But Shapiro said more research is needed before a plan to deal with future outbreaks of shellfish poisoning can be devised.

"The goal is to understand the biology of these organisms so we can predict when it occurs," she said.

Phytoplankton come in blooms, Shapiro said; some appear when the water gets warm, some flourish when there is more light or when there are certain nutrients present.

"If we can predict when these blooms occur, we can prevent people from getting sick," she said.

For example, she said, in Eastern Canada mussels are grown in long mesh tubes that can be moved when toxic phytoplankton are present.

"The shellfish industry (in Eastern Canada) is doing better than it did before," she said. "The key is good monitoring so consumers have confidence."

University Biology Professor Michelle Wood said there are many possible explanations for the appearance of toxic phytoplankton.

One explanation is that recently discovered viral plankton are changing the DNA of normal phytoplankton to make them toxic.

Agricultural run-off from rivers is another possible cause. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife shellfish Biologist John Johnson said most of the toxic shellfish have been found in the Columbia River plume area.

Another cause could be that increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased the food supply of these organisms, Wood said, but the effects of the increase are not clear because we don't know how recently these phytoplankton

appeared.

Bill Keene, Oregon Department of Health epidemiologist, said frozen razor clams from 1985 were found to have domoic acid in them.

Keene said the closures were a precaution, but it's not clear how much domoic acid poses a health risk.

"What level causes illness in humans is unknown," he said. "Biologists may find that levels now are way too low."

Keene said the extent of the health problem is also unknown.

Some people came forward with symptoms after newspapers announced the closures, he said, but the symptoms people had could be attributed to any kind of food poisoning.

"There's no way to confirm the diagnosis," he said.

POWELL

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Otherwise they will continue to face anonymity in the college setting.

Not just anonymity but alienation. When Powell came to the University, he saw a terrible need for non-traditional student advocates. It wasn't his original goal, but with only a half dozen faculty qualifying as caring for the non-traditional student, it soon became his mission.

He has a short list of heroes on campus, people he credits as exceptional in their work as non-traditional student advocates. Faculty and staff members Ed Coleman, Rob Proudfoot, Bunny Nosler and Deborah Casey are wonderful student advocates, said Powell, people who genuinely care for their students. Unfortunately, there are only a few others who could potentially make the list.

"Most of the faculty are not very good at being warm and supportive except to those students with whom they form an ingroup," said Powell in a memo to the University. "That is, most UO faculty are elitist. I have heard a be-

wildering variety of students tell about faculty and staff who treat self-confident white males better than women, better than students of color, better than older-than-average students, better than students who are alienated and scared."

And he worries that teachers are more concerned with doing research than whether their students learn, throwing material at their students and expecting them to teach themselves.

Powell's family is what gives him strength now. He and his second wife Patty were married in October of 1985 on Mount Pisgah in Eugene on the only sunny day of the month. She has two daughters that John calls his own, in addition to John's other child with his first wife, who now attends Mount Holyoke college in Massachusetts.

Powell bristles slightly when thinking about his daughter attending a private school.

"I think it's remarkable that my daughter, who comes from a hillbilly legacy, can break out past me and attend an old-money institution," he said. "I'm not quite sure how I feel about it, but it's quite incredible."

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is looking into different ways to contribute to the awareness of violent crimes through the bookstore, including the possibility of sponsoring events.

Jo Triglio, a member of the Women's Center who spoke against the sale of the magazines at the forum, said she believed the board misunderstood her request to stop the sale of the material.

"This was never an issue of censorship because the bookstore makes decisions everyday on what it wants to sell on its shelves," Triglio said. "What we were saying was that this material hurts us, as women, and that's the part the board missed."

Triglio said the Women's Center will likely take up the issue every year until the bookstore halts its sale of the magazines.

"This issue isn't going to be dropped easily," she said.

Bill Brozman, co-director of Men Against Rape, said he is not pleased with the board's decision. He said he doesn't believe it's a censorship issue because access is not being denied in the community, but only at the bookstore.

"The bookstore is selling the magazines because it's profitable to them," Brozman said. "By selling them, they are equating what these magazines perpetuate within the University and the educational process."

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