

Toxin: If the levels change, the season could open back up again

Continued from Page 1A

their internal organs. While these organs, or viscera, are not typically consumed some traditional Asian recipes prize “crab butter” as a seasoning.

Since the meat is safe, some fishermen have wondered why the agency didn't just issue an order allowing the sale of eviscerated crab — where the organs are removed and the meat remains. But Ayres and others say such an order would be difficult to enforce especially at this point in the season when many small-time wholesale buyers are looking to buy whole crab.

Such a conversation, however, may have had to occur if domoic acid levels had shot up in January when harvest is typically at its peak and seafood plants are processing a lot of crab meat.

“That’s a big discussion we’ll need to have with the industry ... especially if this persists,” Ayres said.

Currently, crab samples have been found with levels of domoic acid as high as 65 parts per million. The state Department of Health threshold for crab is 30 parts per million. In 2003, samples of crab revealed levels as high as 80 parts per million, according to WDFW.

If the levels change, the season could open back up again. Crabbing normally lasts until September and then reopens Dec. 1, though the opening is often delayed by up to a month to allow the newly moulted crab to harden and put on meat.

“It’s not like this is the end of the season,” Ayres said about the Dungeness fisheries closure. “We’re going to continue to test.”

Oregon not affected

North of Chehalis Point, including Grays Harbor,



EO Media Group file

Crabbers pull in their gear following a finding by the Washington State Department of Health that a marine toxin has climbed to more than double safe levels in the guts of coastal Dungeness.

Dungeness crab fisheries are still open and Steve Rumrill, shellfish program leader for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said there are no concerns about Dungeness off of Oregon’s coast. At least not yet.

ODFW gathered crab samples for the state Department of Agriculture last week and tests showed levels of domoic acid were below the threshold. Still, in light of the Washington closure, Oregon’s Department of Agriculture plans to sample crab at ports from Astoria to Coos Bay.

Meanwhile, a number of commercial crabbers hold dual licenses, allowing them to fish for and land crab in both Washington and Oregon. Rumrill says it is up

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— Dan Ayres

coastal shellfish manager for the Dungeness crab fisheries agency

to fishermen to self-report where they landed a load of crab. Any Dungeness caught in the closed Washington waters should not be sold to Oregon processors or buyers, he said.

WDFW began to worry about Dungeness crabs after dangerously high levels of domoic acid were noted in both the water and razor clams along the Long Beach Peninsula and Oregon’s Fort Stevens in May leading to clamming closures in both states.

High levels of the toxin were also noted in Willapa Bay, leading to a brief closure there. Oyster-growers feared long-term closures, but levels of domoic acid have since gone down in the bay while still remaining high off Washington and Oregon’s ocean beaches near the mouth of the Columbia River.

Few landings

The Dungeness closure is another blow to fishermen in

what has already been a poor season. Though the crab caught have been large and meaty and prices per pound started and remained high, the crab are few and far between.

In March, fishermen landed 126,537 pounds in Washington, down from February when WDFW recorded 518,950 pounds landed. And that was drastically down from 3.2 million pounds landed in January and the 3.1 million pounds landed in December when the season opened.

Total landings for the 2014-2015 season as of March 24 come to a little over 7 million pounds. In the 2013-2014 season, fishermen landed 9.5 million pounds. In 2010-2011, fish-

ermen landed 16.7 million pounds. The average season comes out to about 9.5 million pounds, according to WDFW. Crab populations go through multi-year cycles of abundance

In Oregon, commercial Dungeness crab landings from the ocean and Columbia River average about 16.3 million pounds a season, with a record high of 33.5 million pounds recorded in the 2004-2005 season, but have come to only 7.5 million pounds as of April this season.

Information received from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife shows a rising price per pound. At the start of the season, fishermen saw an average price of \$3.62 per pound. That jumped by a little over a dollar in January and then leaped up to \$8.23 a pound in February due to high demand for crab during Chinese New Year celebrations. The average price went down to \$7.44 a pound in March and then to \$6.87 a pound in April.

Ilwaco-based processor’s, Jessie’s Ilwaco Fish Company and Ilwaco Landing, could not be reached for comment, but the Dungeness closure likely won’t harm Bell Buoy Crab Company in Chinook.

“There’s only one vessel here in the port still actively fishing,” said Steve Manewal, manager at the seafood processing plant. He explained that crab landings at the plant usually slow down around this time of year anyway as fishermen transition into other fisheries.

“It’s a slow catch (this year) combined with the fact that a lot of the crab fishermen here are in the process of going to Alaska for salmon fishing,” Manewal said.

Smyth: He sees ending his administrative career in Knappa

Continued from Page 1A

skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education.

Smyth said the school has improved the number of its students meeting or exceeding state standards in reading, writing, math and science by more than 30 percent.

“I think it is a diamond in the rough,” Smyth said of Knappa. “It’s waiting for excellence, and it’s got the potential to reach excellence.”

A new challenge

After eight years at Springwater, Smyth said he was looking for more of a challenge. Before Springwater, he spent four years as principal

at Sunrise Middle School in the North Clackamas School District, and before that four years as assistant principal at Milwaukie High School.

Before moving into administration, Smyth was a high school social studies teacher in Oregon and California, where he also served as the head wrestling coach and assistant football coach. He has a master’s degree in education from Claremont Graduate University and a bachelor’s in American studies from Pomona College, both institutions in Claremont, Calif. He is originally from Portland and attended Cleveland High School.

“I’m the first kid out of nine children to graduate col-

lege,” Smyth said of why he entered education. “Because that opportunity changed my life, I wanted to give it back. And that still drives me.”

Smyth has three children. His oldest, Colleen, recently graduated from Willamette University and is heading to Nashville, Tenn., on an assignment for Teach for America. His second oldest, Spencer, recently finished his first year at the University of Oregon. His youngest, Francie, is a senior at Lincoln High School living with her mother.

Smyth said he sees ending his administrative career in Knappa, staying about six years before moving out of school districts but into a related field.

Pot: Ferrioli wants people in areas of Oregon that opposed legalization to have time to adjust to the ‘sea change’

Continued from Page 1A

lack of an option in that bill for cities and counties to ban pot businesses that caught Ferrioli’s attention.

Ferrioli wrote in the email that he worked hard on legislation to implement Measure 91, including with his proposal to allow medical dispensaries to sell pot to adults age 21 and older starting July 1 because the state will not launch its recreational pot system until 2016.

“In return, I have asked that you respect the 22 counties and 140 plus cities which opposed or voted (for) a moratorium on implementation of (Measure 91) by allowing them to opt-out through a simple vote of local elected officials as we did in SB 964A,” Ferrioli wrote in the email to Sen. Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, and Rep. Ann Lininger, D-Lake Oswego, the co-chairs of the legislative committee.

If the committee does not allow cities and counties to pass bans, Ferrioli wrote that “I will vote ‘no’ on this bill and oppose its passage on the Senate floor on the grounds that it will force cities and counties to approve

‘Counties and cities voted to become either wet or dry.’

— State Sen.

Ted Ferrioli

talking about the end of Prohibition

actions constituting a willful violation of federal law, or, in consequence, to become respondents to costly civil litigation.”

In an interview Wednesday afternoon, Ferrioli said he wants to allow time for people in areas of the state that opposed legalization of marijuana to adjust to the “sea change” taking place, similar to the end of prohibition on alcohol.

“Counties and cities voted to become either wet or dry,” Ferrioli said.

Ferrioli and Burdick said late Wednesday afternoon they see promise in a proposal by the League of Oregon Cities, which would allow elected officials in cities and counties that voted against Measure 91 — the

November initiative to legalize marijuana for adults — to pass bans on medical and recreational pot businesses. Elected officials in cities and counties where voters approved Measure 91 could also vote to pass bans, but those would be referred to the voters.

“I think it has potential because it recognizes that some areas just did not vote for (Measure) 91,” Burdick said.

Burdick said that regardless of whether there are enough votes to pass legislation without Ferrioli’s support, the goal is to attain broad support for any legislation they pass.

“We’ve been bipartisan all the way through,” Burdick said. “We want to continue in a bipartisan way.”

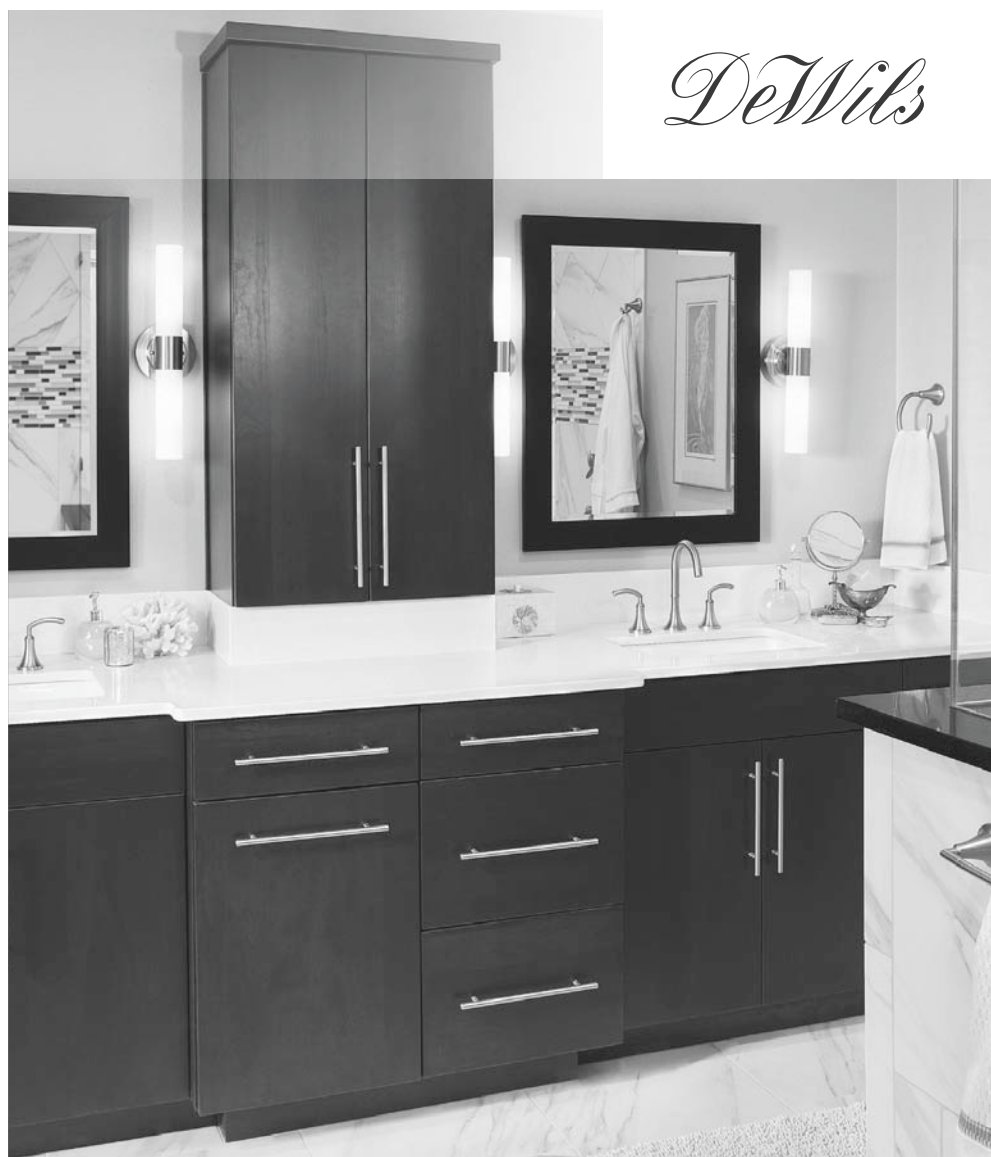
Scott Winkels, a lobbyist for the League of Oregon Cities, worked on the opt-out proposal.

“We’ve just been sort of looking for a creative way to address the disparity, the geographic disparity in the vote,” Winkels said. “I think we found something that has some promise.”

The legislative committee is expected to meet again next week.

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