

Algae: Crab fishermen are bracing for a tough season

Continued from Page 1A

the lobster population, studies have found.

"I don't have a crystal ball, but I think we're being given a warning here," said Vera Trainer, who manages the marine biotoxin program at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle. "We're being shown what the future is going to look like. This is more of what we can expect."

Razor clams, for now, have been taken off menus in Oregon and Washington. Shellfish managers have closed recreational digs after finding dangerous levels of domoic acid in the bivalves. Those closures have cost an estimated \$22 million in tourism-related spending, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Crabbing was also closed along parts of the Washington coast over the summer, though

crabbing continued in the Puget Sound.

Matt Hunter, shellfish project leader with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said crabbing is huge fishery in the state and any closure will have "trickle-down effect on the economy, not only on the coastal communities."

Crab can still be found in many restaurants and stores, including San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf, and health officials say crabs sold in stores are safe to eat. Some crab on the market now may have been harvested months ago and frozen for later; commercial crab fishing is currently open in some parts of Alaska, Oregon and Puget Sound.

Tough season

In California, crab fishermen are bracing for a tough season.

"Needless to say, this is devastating," said Steve Fitz, who



Eric Risberg/AP Photo

Crab pots are stacked along a pier at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco.

owns Mr. Morgan Fisheries in Half Moon Bay. Crab represents the bulk of annual income for many in the fishing community, he said. Still, he's optimistic that toxin levels will go down and the season will open soon.

Restaurants and customers say they'll adjust their habits.

"It's a disappointment because we really look forward to it every November," said Matt Watson, manager of Woodhouse Fish Co. in San Francisco, which will do its best to get whole crab at a reasonable price from other states.

Kris Ducker, who grew up in

California, looks forward to her family's holiday tradition: eating crab served ice cold, cracked, with a side of sourdough bread.

Even though she now lives in Texas, she still tries to find fresh Dungeness crab.

"We're looking forward to having Dungeness crab for Christmas Eve. We could move on to something else. It wouldn't kill us, but we would be sad," she said.

Scientists say the warm waters that fostered the massive toxic algae bloom off the West Coast this year is more likely a short-term climate event than one attributed to climate change.

"Whether this warming itself is a direct function of climate change or not, we can't say," said Mark Wells, an oceanography professor in the School of Marine Sciences at the University of Maine. However, the climate change models project warming along the coastlines

over the next several decades, so "this type of event probably is going to become much more frequent in the future."

On the Northeast coast, scientists have documented shifts in species as the result of warmer waters and that's meant some changes in what is caught and where.

"We see lots of shifting going on," said Richard Merrick, NOAA Fisheries chief science adviser. Significant fish stocks have been shifting northward and deeper into cooler waters along the Northwest Atlantic Ocean, he noted. The New England cod fishery collapsed but haddock fishing has gone up as fishermen switched, he said.

Another study found that warming seas will likely send West Coast fish species northward by about 20 miles a decade, and some species probably will disappear from southern ranges off California and Oregon.

FFA: Membership nationwide is at an all-time high

Continued from Page 1A

sciences degree at Oregon State University and going to work there full-time after graduation.

Today, she is the Oregon FFA's associate director of programs, handling career development, membership and awards and helping out at the state fair.

"I felt the need to give back," she said. "The organization had done so much for me when I was in high school. I really attribute all of my success to FFA. ... I really believe in everything FFA does for students."

As a student who was drawn to FFA by its practical hands-on activities, Kraxberger is a testament to the growth of the 87-year-old national organization formerly known as Future Farmers of America.

Record membership

FFA's membership nationwide is at an all-time high, with 629,367 participants in the 2014-15 academic year compared to 490,017 a decade ago, according to Kristy Meyer, the spokeswoman at the national FFA headquarters in Indianapolis.

Participation in FFA has been trending upward throughout the West, too. In California, there were 79,526 members in 2014-15, up from 64,201 a decade earlier. Washington state's FFA ranks have increased from 5,802 in 2011-12 to 8,024 last year. Membership has also been increasing in Oregon and Idaho.

Started for high school students who wanted to be production farmers, FFA has broadened its focus in recent decades to encourage students who aspire to become teachers, veterinarians, scientists and other professionals who interact with agricultural industries.

In addition to hands-on farming, FFA members learn "soft skills" such as public speaking, marketing and interviewing for jobs, Kraxberger said.

"There's something for everyone in FFA," she said. "Something really cool that's been happening is that for people in the city who don't have access to farms, maybe they're doing a science project related to agriculture. ... If it relates to the environment or natural resources, it's very much FFA."

Students and teachers say this emphasis on building career skills is a big reason for the FFA's burgeoning popularity. The growth of agriculture education in schools, the continued involvement of alumni and youngsters' desire to avert a future global food shortage are also factors, they say.

"I think FFA is just an amazing program that sets kids up for success," said Ally Rose McDonald, a senior at Durham, Calif., High School and the California FFA's Superior Region secretary. "It truly opens doors. It gives you an opportunity to see what kind of agricultural fields you'd like to pursue."

"I think FFA gives you the tools to be confident and successful in talking to other people," she said. "Those are tools that are going to be necessary throughout your life."

Bucking the trend

FFA's growth has come as



Tim Hearden/Capitol Press

FFA members from Northern California await a series of competitions Oct. 15 at Shasta College in Redding, Calif. FFA membership nationwide has reached record levels.

participation in other youth programs for high school students has seen a decline.

For instance, Boy Scouts of America membership fell 7 percent last year, continuing a decade-long decline, and the number of Girl Scouts and adult volunteers dropped by 6 percent, The Associated Press reported. There were about 3.4 million Boy Scouts and adult volunteers and about 2.8 million Girl Scouts and volunteers last year.

Youth team sports participation has also declined in the last five years, according to a report by the Sports and Fitness Industry Association.

What makes FFA different is its affiliation with high schools, leaders say. A student might start with an agriculture-related class and become involved in FFA's extracurricular activities.

"I think we're just ahead of the curve," said Katy Teixeira, an Anderson, Calif., high school adviser who was an FFA member. "It gives kids an opportunity to travel and to learn and compete at the state, national and international level."

Jack Klaiber, a freshman at Anderson, Calif., High School, is in his first year of FFA.

"At first it was just because some of my friends were doing it," Klaiber said of his reason for joining. "As I started to attend the events, I realized this is something I want to put my time into and it will be a great thing for me."

While Klaiber isn't necessarily planning a career in agriculture, "I'd still like it to be a main part of my life," he said.

Humble beginnings

Fostering farming careers was the sole purpose when 33 students from 18 states gathered at the American Royal Livestock Show in Kansas City to form Future Farmers of America in 1928. The group elected Leslie Applegate of Freehold, N.J., as its first president and adopted its national emblem.

The national FFA was organized two years after Walter S. Newman, Virginia's state supervisor of agriculture education, worked with other ag educators to start the Future Farmers of Virginia to address concerns that boys were losing interest and leaving the farm.

FFA adopted its official creed in 1930 and introduced its familiar blue corduroy jackets three years later. In 1965, the FFA merged with a similar organization for young African Americans called New Farmers of America, and girls gained full membership privileges as voting delegates in 1969.

In 1988, Future Farmers of

America changed its name to the National FFA Organization to reflect the growing diversity of the agriculture industry, according to the organization's website.

"One of the reasons for (the change) was that FFA wasn't strictly about farming, it was about agriculture as a whole," said Meyer, the organization's spokeswoman. "It was helping to encompass the idea that agriculture is something we embrace in every facet of our life."

Today, all 50 states and two U.S. territories are charter members of the national organization, representing 7,757 local chapters.

For each school chapter, there are three components — classroom instruction, hands-on learning outside the classroom and a leadership structure with elected officers, Meyer said.

Ag education push

In some states, FFA's membership ranks have been helped by a push for more ag education. In Idaho, state FFA executive director Casey Zufelt credits the legislature's agricultural education initiative, passed in 2014, with getting students involved.

In June, a record number of students — more than 960 — competed in state career development events at the University of Idaho campus in Moscow. Idaho FFA boasted 4,372 members during the last school year, up from 3,965 in 2013-2014.

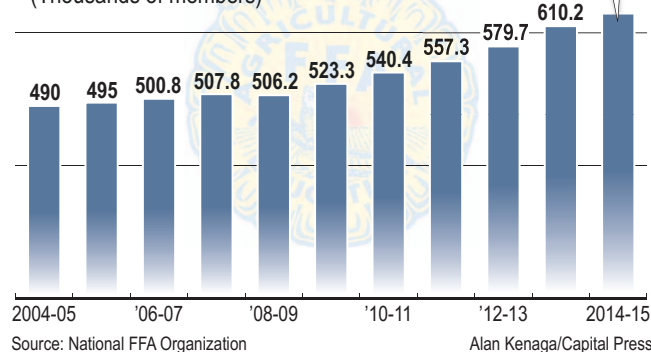
"In our state, we've had a really neat energy going on with the Ag Ed Initiative," which provides about \$2 million more in annual funding for secondary ag education in Idaho, Zufelt said. "It was a grass-roots effort from teachers a couple of years ago who decided to take some action in improving the quality of the programs and bringing more money to the program as well. ... That energy translates to the students."

In California, FFA executive director Jim Aschwanden expects the state's membership to cross the 80,000 threshold this year. One big reason for the increased interest may be that ag teachers have pushed for recognition of their classes as meeting entrance requirements for University of California and California State University campuses, he said.

"About 45 percent of the classes offered in our ag program meet UC and CSU entrance requirements one way or another," said Aschwanden, who is also executive director of the California Agricultural Teachers Association. "Our integrated ag biology courses are viewed as the equivalent

FFA membership nationwide

(Thousands of members)



of regular biology by the UC and CSU systems, so a student can take ag and not have to worry about their access into college."

Moreover, ag mechanics classes are growing "by leaps and bounds" because teachers of other technical programs are retiring and leaving school shops empty, and ag instructors are teaching welding and other facets of equipment maintenance to take up the slack, Aschwanden said.

"We turn out 75 (ag) teacher candidates every year," he said.

"The rest of the career tech areas combined don't train that many."

Teachers' passion

Additionally, students are captivated by the sheer enthusiasm of instructors, said Abbie DeMeerleer, the Washington state FFA's executive director.

"I think they appeal to students and thereby FFA membership increases because those teachers really care," she said. "They became ag teachers because it's a passion for them. They want to see agriculture

succeed, and they want to see the future of our food, fiber and natural resource profession strong and well-positioned. And they share that passion with their students."

McDonald, the Durham High School student, agrees. She said advisers get youngsters excited about FFA.

"I think FFA is just an amazing program that sets kids up for success," McDonald said.

Finally, teenagers — particularly ones in urban chapters — are interested in learning about food production, the organization's leaders say.

"I think, too, that this generation has a desire really to help society, and they know it's really important to feed the world," Meyer said.

While FFA has expanded from production agriculture to include other career skills, the organization will "stay true to the farming aspect," Oregon's Kraxberger said.

Meyer agrees: "I think we're going to continue down the path we're on and really encourage students to understand their key role in the world today."





COLUMBIA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Our people make
The Planetree Difference

Congratulations Spirit of Caring Award Winner Dr. Jennifer Lycette!

The Spirit of Caring Awards honor individuals who personalize, humanize and demystify the healthcare experience.

"Her care for each patient is evident with all the compliments we hear... She motivates her clinic to be excellent, to have leadership and compassion."

— Award nomination for Dr. Jennifer Lycette

2111 Exchange St., Astoria, Oregon • (503) 325-4321
www.columbiamemorial.org • A Planetree-Designated Hospital