

North coast beaches closed to mussel harvesting due to marine toxins

August 1, 2008... The Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife announce the closure of recreational mussel harvesting from Arcadia Beach in Clatsop County to the mouth of the Columbia River due to elevated levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning or PSP toxins. The closure includes mussels on the beaches, rocks, jetties, and at the entrance to bays in this section of the Oregon Coast.

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. Crabs are not affected by this level of toxin and are safe to eat.

Commercial shellfish products remain safe for consumers. Samples taken from commercial markets show no PSP at this time.

All areas south of Arcadia Beach on the Oregon coast remain open to recreational and commercial shellfish harvesting.

Shellfish contaminated with PSP toxins 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 toxins are produced by algae and usually originate in the ocean.

ODA will continue to test for shellfish toxins weekly. 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.