

DEC issues PSP clarification

Today the Department of Environmental Conservation issued a press release to clarify its recent warning about paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP).

The department wants to make the following facts clear:

1. Crab are safe to eat and do

not absorb the toxin which causes PSP. Only shellfish such as sea snails, butter clams, and mussels concentrate the toxin and are potentially unsafe for human consumption.

2. DEC has certified four beaches in Alaska as safe for commercial shellfish harvesting.

Commercial clam harvesters obtain razor clams from state certified beaches and sell them both inside and outside Alaska. Commercial clam harvesters' permits allow clams to be taken only from these certified beaches. They are Kanak Island near Cordova, Polly Creek/Crescent River and Chinitna Bay on Cook Inlet, and Halibut Cove Lagoon near Homer. These areas are also open to sport harvesters but are nor-

mally inaccessible because of their remoteness.

3. There are no other beaches in Alaska which have been certified as safe for sport harvesting. Sport fishermen take a risk when digging shellfish from uncertified areas because of changing condition of temperature, wind and waves which may cause the microorganisms that carry the toxin to flourish.

4. Of the numerous species of

Alaska shellfish, razor clams are the least risky for sport harvesters. Unlike butter clams and mussels, there has never been a case of paralytic shellfish poisoning reported from eating razor clams, including those obtained from uncertified beaches. People who harvest razor clams should remove the tip of the neck and the viscera. However, this is still no guarantee that they are safe.

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