



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2016
PH16-011

CONTACT: [Orville Thomas](mailto:Orville.Thomas@cdph.ca.gov)
(916) 440-7259

CDPH to Conduct Water Quality Study in Humboldt Bay

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith today announced that a water quality study being performed in Humboldt County may result in portions of Humboldt Bay turning red.

The study, which runs March 14 - 25, 2016, will provide information to protect commercial shellfish growing areas from potential sources of pollution. A similar study was conducted in 2004.

“The goal here is the safety of people who like to eat commercially harvested shellfish, such as oysters, clams and mussels,” said Dr. Smith. “While this may cause the bay to look unusual, the water should return to its natural color within days. The dye is commonly used for these studies and has an excellent safety record.”

The non-toxic, fluorescent dye, Rhodamine WT, will be used near the Arcata and Elk River wastewater treatment plants. Scientists, aboard boats and on the shore, will observe the colored water with instrumentation to see how the currents flow and how the dye is diluted. This will illustrate how water currents and transport of treated wastewater could be affected by proposed improvements to the Arcata Wastewater Treatment Plant, and a proposed move of the plant’s outfall. That information will help CDPH decide where commercial shellfishing can safely be allowed.

“This study will help CDPH protect public health by determining where shellfish can be safely harvested,” said Melissa Martel, director of Humboldt County’s Division of Environmental Health.

Local certified shellfish growers will provide assistance to technical staff from CDPH and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

www.cdph.ca.gov

