



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Salem, OR

# NEWS RELEASE

February 19, 2018

CONTACT: Rick Osborn (503) 986-1074  
[Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov)

## **Bill protects public health and safe fisheries**

*SB 1550 establishes sea-to-sale tracking for Oregon seafood*

SALEM – The Oregon Senate passed a bill today that establishes a sea-to-sale tracking program to protect public health without shutting down entire segments of the seafood industry.

Senate Bill 1550 – which passed with a 27-0 vote on the Senate floor today – authorizes the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt record-keeping requirements for the seafood industry.

“When a boat comes in and drops off a load of crab, for example, we would love the processor to be able to keep a record of which boat that crab came from and where the crab was harvested,” said Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay, who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “Then we can track that product and if biotoxins are found, we can have an idea where it came from. Then we can close off that area of the ocean for commercial fishing and leave the rest open. Right now, biotoxins like domoic acid are closing and delaying seasons for entire fisheries up and down the Oregon Coast. Traceability will help us fix that.”

Biotoxin outbreaks – such as domoic acid algae blooms along the Oregon Coast – can contaminate seafood, causing public health concerns. Because there is no tracking currently in place, harvest seasons for fisheries all over the state are delayed and even shut down in response to these events. A tracking system will allow the industry and government agencies to locate the specific areas where there are biotoxins. Then those specific areas can be closed to fishing, instead of the entire Oregon coastline.

“It’s not just one specific area that gets shut down right now, if biotoxins are detected, and that has a huge negative impact on the coastal economy,” Roblan said. “This bill provides a way

around that, while protecting the public health. Originally, we set out to work on this because it was important to Oregon's Dungeness crab industry, but the more we dug into the issue, the more we found that this can help a lot of different seafood industries. Making sure people don't get sick from contaminated food is the top priority. This allows us to track seafood from the sea to your plate."

The bill gained support from the fishing industry, state agencies and other advocacy groups. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Resources Program Manager Caren Braby provided testimony on the bill.

"This bill will clarify and augment existing records-keeping requirements for the seafood industry ... and grant access to these records to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, for the purposes of protecting public health," Braby said. "Biotxin accumulation in commercial seafood species and the resulting threat of fishery closures to protect public health leads to uncertainty and economic costs for the state, the fishing industry and coastal communities that rely on them."

The Nature Conservancy Marine Fisheries Program Manager Gway Kirchner submitted written testimony in support of the bill.

"As you know, Oregon's marine fisheries constitute a significant part of rural coastal Oregon's economy," Kirchner wrote. "Seafood traceability is an important tool needed to ensure a strong future for Oregon's marine fisheries. Consumers are becoming more aware of the source of their seafood. They want assurance that the industry they are supporting is sustainable and of the highest quality. They want to connect with the story of how their fish was caught and by whom. They also want to be sure their fish is safe to eat."

The bill now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

###