



Lummi Tribal Health Center

2592 Kwina Road Bellingham, WA 98226

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Coronavirus (COVID-19) Policy for Diving

Background:

The Lummi Nation has one of the largest indigenous dive fishery fleets in Puget Sound. The coronavirus pandemic has presented some unique challenges that require Lummi management authorities to focus on ways to reduce risk of spreading COVID-19. Diving activity requires three crew members working in close quarters, they frequently share equipment during a fishery, and then will go back to their homes within the Lummi community afterward.

The decision to open fisheries is up to the Director of the Lummi Natural Resources Department in conjunction with the Lummi Fisheries and Natural Resources Commission. Sometimes other tribal authorities (e.g., the Lummi Indian Business Council or the Office of the Reservation Attorney) weigh in on unusual or particularly contentious fisheries. All Lummi decision-makers have been apprised of the general risks associated with opening a fishery during the current COVID-19 crisis.

The Lummi dive community and management authorities recognize that no amount of public health infrastructure will completely protect dive crew members or the Lummi community from contracting COVID-19. To reduce the risk of spreading of COVID-19 the Lummi Public Health Team recommends the following safety plan.

Recommendations to reduce risk of Coronavirus Infections

Pre-fishing

1. **Testing:** The Lummi Public Health Team recommends that all dive crew members get tested for COVID-19 prior to a scheduled fishery opening. Ideally, testing would best be done two days prior to the opening with results provided to both the divers and Lummi management authorities at least one day before the opening. Divers or hose tenders that don't get tested, or receive a positive test result, should not be allowed to participate in the commercial opening.
2. **Social-distancing:** In general, before, during, and after the fishery, dive crews should exercise common-sense social-distancing measures when gearing up, when underway aboard the dive vessel, and during the sellout to reduce the risk of potential COVID-19 transmission. Appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE), e.g., gloves and masks, should always be worn.

During fishery

3. **Dive Equipment** – With the exception of a shared surface-supplied air compressor, all divers must have and use their own equipment.
 - a. Masks/helmets, hoods, drysuit, and gloves – There should be no sharing of equipment between divers.



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- b. Compressor and umbilical – A compressor provides air flow unidirectionally, from the surface, through an umbilical hose, to the diver. The umbilical hose is connected to a diver's mask or helmet. When the diver inhales a breath of compressed air, it is exhausted to the surrounding water after the diver exhales. The hose tender handles the umbilical before, during, and after a dive. In particular, the umbilical and safety line are used to pull the diver up after a dive. Dive crews should wear appropriate masks and gloves during these procedures to reduce the risk of potential cross-contamination from double-handling equipment.

Post-fishing

1. **Selling Catch to Buyer** – Every effort should be spent to enforce social distancing during the buying and selling of catch to a licensed buyer. To help with this, during the sellout, all towing rigs and vessels will line up, staying apart from each other. When it is a vessel's turn to sell out, the vessel will move to the front of the line, then let the buyer or the buyer's representative come to that vessel. Every effort will also be made to reduce the number of people handling the product. The buyer will remove the product from the vessel at one time and deliver it to the buyer's weight scale. The transaction will proceed accordingly with the dive crew remaining in place on the vessel or in the towing rig. The payment and fisher's copy of the shellfish receiving ticket will then be delivered back to the vessel by the buyer or the buyer's representative. In this way, the exposure between people will be greatly reduced.
2. **Self-Monitoring for COVID-19 Symptoms:** all crew members agree to practice social distancing with their families and households. If they develop any new COVID-19 symptoms they are to call the *Public Health phone line immediately (360-383-8251)* to report their symptoms and undergo screening for testing.

These recommendations may change as more information becomes available.

Sincerely,

Dakotah Lane, MD
Executive Medical Director
Lummi Tribal Health Clinic