

# Tons of dead sardines scooped from Calif. harbor

March 14 2011

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In this Tuesday, March 8, 2011 file photo, Annette Burch gathers up dead fish in the King Harbor area of Redondo Beach, south of Los Angeles. Cleaning crews on Sunday, March 13 finished removing millions of fish found floating dead in a Southern California marina, five days after the slimy, stinking mass of sardines was discovered. (AP Photo/The Daily Breeze, Brad Graverson, File)

(AP) -- Cleaning crews on Sunday finished removing millions of fish found floating dead in a Southern California marina, five days after the slimy, stinking mass of sardines was discovered.

Crews from several coastal cities and more than 700 volunteers removed about 140 tons of dead sardines from King Harbor in Redondo Beach, city officials said in a statement.

The fish were taken to a composting center where they will be turned

into fertilizer.

The city said that while the fish were gone, local crews will continue cleaning up the aftermath of the die-off in the harbor for another week.

Biologists from the University of Southern California and the California Department of Fish and Game have said critically low [oxygen levels](#) in the water caused the sardines to suffocate.

But the USC scientists said high levels of domoic acid were found in the sardines, which may have distressed them off the Los Angeles coastline and caused them to swim into the Redondo Beach marina.

Fish and game officials also [were testing fish for toxins](#) at its animal forensics laboratory. Results were expected this week.

Domoic acid is often found in the stomach of fish that have been feeding on plankton during toxic algae blooms, one of which was spotted off Redondo Beach on Wednesday.

The toxin has been linked to neurological disorders, illnesses and deaths in seabirds, sea lions, [sea otters](#) and whales, spurring concerns for the gulls, [pelicans](#) and other sea life that have been feasting on the dead fish in King Harbor.

The [sardines](#) died late Monday and caked the water's surface the next morning, stacking up to 2 feet deep in some spots.

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