



## Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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### PORTIONS OF RI SOUND AND LOWER NARRAGANSETT BAY AND SAKONNET RIVER CLOSED TO SHELLFISHING

PROVIDENCE –The Rhode Island Departments of Environmental Management (DEM) and Health (RIDOH) today announced that areas of Rhode Island Sound, lower Narragansett Bay south of the Newport Pell and Jamestown Verrazzano Bridges, and lower Sakonnet River will be closed to shellfish harvesting beginning at sunrise on Wednesday, March 1, until further notice. The closure is due to a confirmed harmful algae bloom (HAB) caused by the phytoplankton, *Pseudo-nitzschia* spp. The closures exclude carnivorous snails, such as whelk and moon snails.

Impacted waters include all RI waters north of a line from Point Judith to the southern tip of Gooseberry Neck, off Horseneck Beach in Westport MA, and south from the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge, south from the Newport Pell Bridge and south of an east/west line across the Sakonnet River lying one-quarter mile south of the pipeline found just south of Black Point. Shellfish harvested from the open portions of Harvester Tagging Areas 5B, 4A and 3W should temporarily be identified as 5B North, 4A North and 3W North.

The shellfishing closure stems from shellfish samples collected on Sunday, February 26 and Monday, February 27 from five lower Bay locations off Jamestown, Newport, and Little Compton. These samples were tested by the RI Department of Health Laboratories for the presence of domoic acid. Levels of concern were found in shellfish at four locations with domoic acid levels ranging from 14 – 32 parts per million; the action level for mandatory closure of shellfishing waters established by the Food and Drug Administration is 20 parts per million. In the coming days, DEM and RIDOH will collect additional shellfish samples from both affected waters and waters unaffected by today's announcement to further evaluate the bloom. A similar bloom led to shellfishing closures last fall.

For updates on shellfish closure areas, contact the DEM 24-hour shellfishing hotline at 401-222-2900 and/or sign up for the DEM Marine Fisheries email list at [rimaryfisheries-subscribe@listserve.ri.gov](mailto:rimaryfisheries-subscribe@listserve.ri.gov). Visit <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/water/shellfish/shellfish-monitoring.php> for more information.

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