



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

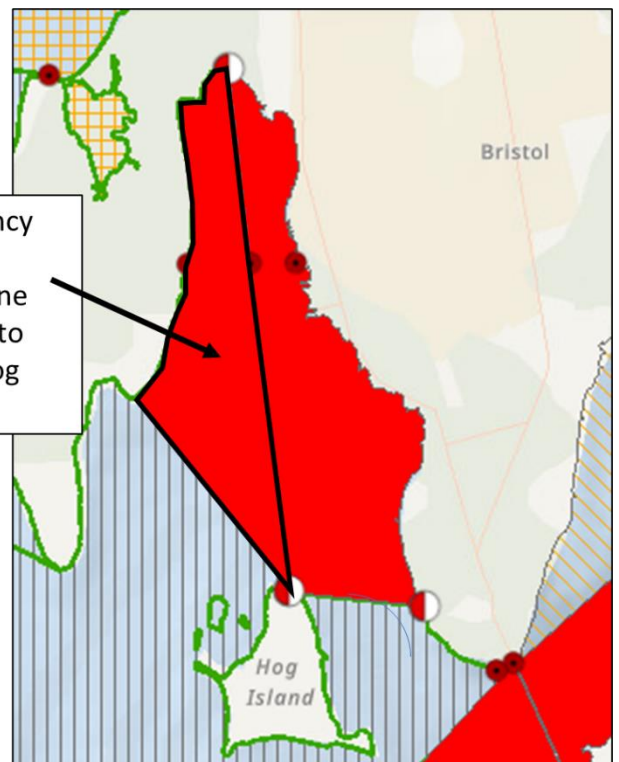
Friday, March 8, 2024

SEWAGE SPILL CLOSES WESTERN SIDE OF BRISTOL HARBOR TO SHELLFISHING

PROVIDENCE, RI — The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) is announcing that a 458-acre portion of the western side of Bristol Harbor will be closing to shellfish harvest at sunrise tomorrow, Saturday, March 9.

All waters north of a line extending from the southernmost tip of Usher Point in Bristol to the northernmost tip of Hog Island will be closed to shellfish harvest beginning at sunrise on March 9. Per federal Food And Drug Administration guidance for safe shellfish harvest, these waters will remain closed until sunrise on Saturday March 30. The emergency closure includes the Bristol Harbor seasonal shellfish area (GA3-2) located in the northwestern portion of Bristol Harbor.

458-acre emergency closure. Waters north of line from Usher Point to northern tip of Hog Island.



Over four inches of rain have fallen in the Providence metropolitan area this week. Along with flow restrictions in the Bristol Wastewater Treatment Facility's main pump station, the rainfall resulted in an overflow of around 180,000 gallons of untreated wastewater that ultimately discharged into Bristol Harbor. The emergency shellfish closure is necessary to provide adequate dilution volume and time for shellfish in the area to depurate, or cleanse pollutants, which may have been discharged into Bristol Harbor. Staff at the wastewater treatment facility have set up an additional pump ahead of this weekend's predicted rain to prevent additional sewage overflows while they continue to evaluate the cause and remedy of the flow restriction.

DEM, the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), and the RI Coastal Resources Management Council, along with industry partners, collaborate to ensure that shellfish grown and harvested from Rhode Island waters continues to be a quality safe seafood product to be enjoyed by all consumers. This is achieved by diligent monitoring of shellfish harvesting waters to protect public health. Such monitoring enables a quick response when conditions indicate a change in water quality due to natural events such as algae blooms or unusual weather events.

For more information on the shellfish harvesting classifications, review the annual notice available at [RIDEM - Shellfish](#). An [interactive shellfishing map](#) is also available.

For information on emergency and conditional area water quality related shellfish closures, call DEM's 24-hour shell fishing hotline at 401-222-2900, visit www.dem.ri.gov/shellfish, or sign up for the Office of Water Resources' listserv here: RishellfishOWR-subscribe@listserve.ri.gov.

For information about DEM programs and services, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM or on Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM) for timely updates.

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