



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

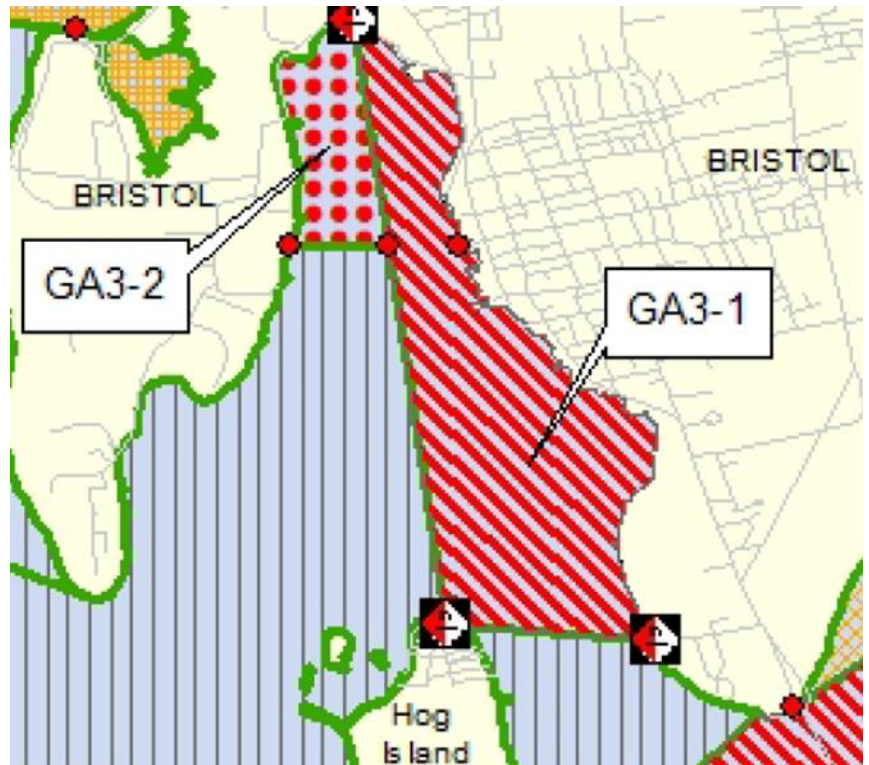
Friday, March 22, 2024

DEM ANNOUNCES THAT THE WESTERN SIDE OF BRISTOL HARBOR REOPENS TO SHELLFISHING TOMORROW, MARCH 23 AT SUNRISE

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) is announcing that a 458-acre portion of the western side of Bristol Harbor, that had been [closed to shellfishing since March 9 due to a sewage spill](#), will be reopening to shellfish harvest at sunrise tomorrow on Saturday, March 23, 2024. This includes the reopening of seasonal shellfish area Growing Area (GA) 3-2 and the reopening of previously closed water north of a line extending from the southernmost tip of Usher Point in Bristol to the northernmost tip of Hog Island.

The spill occurred on March 7 due to intense rainfall in combination with flow restrictions in the [Bristol Wastewater Treatment Facility](#)'s main pump station which resulted in an overflow of approximately 180,000 gallons of untreated wastewater that ultimately discharged into Bristol Harbor. The emergency shellfish closure was necessary to provide adequate dilution volume and time for shellfish in the area to deplete or cleanse pollutants that may have been discharged into Bristol Harbor.

Water samples collected on March 13 and shellfish samples collected on March 19 met [US Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) standards](#), indicating that the area has returned to acceptable water quality for safe shellfish harvest. DEM expresses its gratitude to shellfisherman John McDonald for collecting the shellfish samples that were analyzed in support of reopening the area to shellfishing.



DEM, the [Rhode Island Department of Health](#) (RIDOH), and the [RI Coastal Resources Management Council](#) (CRMC), 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. This 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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