



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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DEM ANNOUNCES THAT SEASONAL SHELLFISH AREA CLOSURES TAKE EFFECT ON SATURDAY MAY 28

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announces that seasonal shellfish area closures will take effect at sunrise on Saturday, May 25, and will remain in place until Tuesday, October 15. Consistent with federal requirements, DEM announces changes in shellfish harvest area closures in local waters every year at this time due to potential water quality impacts associated with marinas and mooring fields. The seasonal closure areas are within:

- Bristol Harbor
- Dutch Harbor Area, Jamestown
- Fishing Cove, Wickford Harbor
- Great Salt Pond and Trims Pond, Block Island
- Potter Cove, Prudence Island
- Sakonnet Harbor, Little Compton

In addition, small seasonal marina closures in the southern coastal ponds, Fort Wetherill, and the Kickemuit River in Warren will also go into effect on May 25.

No changes in shellfish classification

Shellfish harvest area water quality is also evaluated in May of each year. Bacteria data collected during the prior year is reviewed for compliance with national public health water quality standards. 2023 was a wet year with 57.7 inches of rain falling at TF Green Airport. This compares to a long-term average annual rainfall total of 49 inches of rain. Wet weather can convey potentially harmful bacteria from the watershed to shellfish growing waters. Despite the wet weather in 2023, bacteria water quality remained good, and all approved and conditionally approved Rhode Island shellfish areas met national FDA standards for safe shellfish harvest. Accordingly, there are no downgrades in RI shellfish growing areas in the May 2024 evaluation.

“From the opening of the Providence River to quahogging for the first time in 75 years in 2021, to the opening of new shellfishing grounds in Greenwich Bay in 2022, to the Mount Hope Bay reopening in 2023, the trend toward better water quality in Narragansett Bay is clear,” said DEM Director Terry Gray. “The improvements propelling this progress — replacing and phasing out outmoded cesspools that pollute groundwater, upgrading wastewater treatment facilities, and improving collection and treatment of

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stormwater — have not come cheaply, but they’ve been worth every penny because the bay is cleaner and healthier than it’s been in generations.”

Rhode Island shellfish are much sought-after seafood because of a long history of delivering a high-quality product. This is achieved by diligent monitoring of shellfish harvesting waters, protecting public health with a high level of oversight when conditions indicate a change in water quality either from natural sources such as algae blooms or by the quick response to emergency conditions. 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 www.dem.ri.gov/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 or sign up for DEM’s Office of Water Resources' listserv here: RishellfishOWR-subscribe@listserve.ri.gov.

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