



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

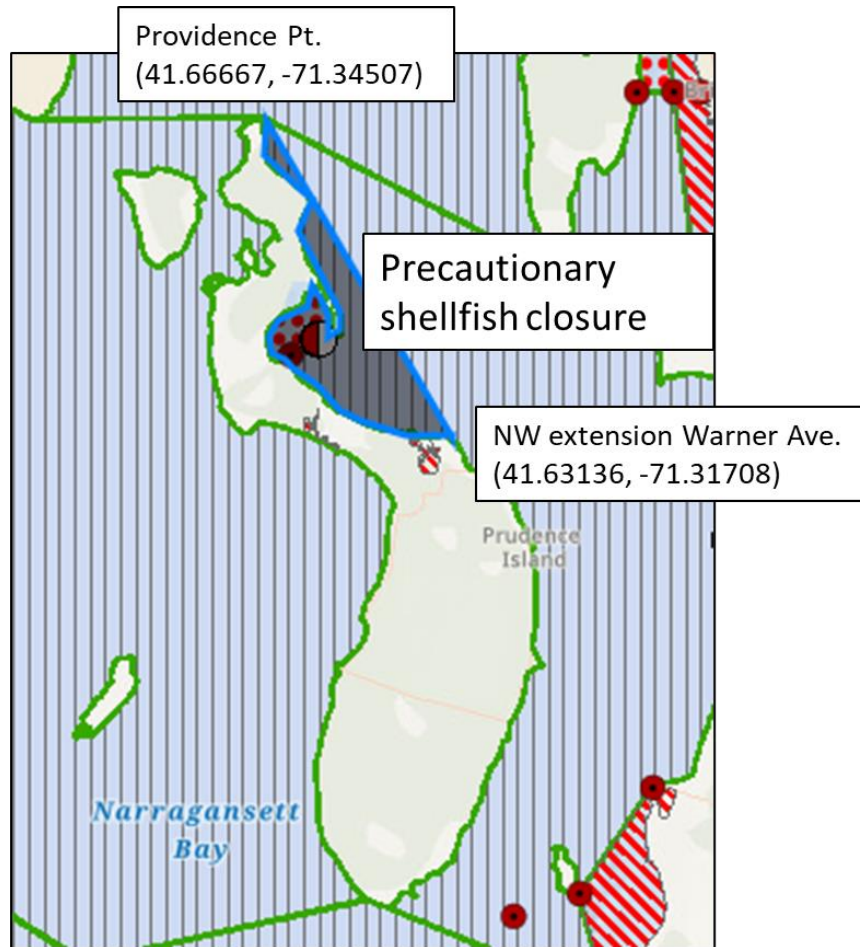
Wednesday, July 24, 2024

DEM ANNOUNCES PRECAUTIONARY CLOSURE OF PRUDENCE ISLAND SHELLFISHING AREA JULY 27 THROUGH AUGUST 3 AHEAD OF “AQUAPALOOZA”

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) is announcing that due to the increased risk of accidental or illicit discharges of sewage from hundreds of boats gathering off Prudence Island that is expected this weekend, DEM [is once again](#) preemptively closing 700 acres of shellfish grounds on the north end of the island. The precautionary closure is from sunrise on July 27 until sunrise on August 3 and extends from the shoreline and all waters south and west of a line from Providence Point to the northwest extension of Warner Avenue on Prudence Island.

The Aquapalooza gathering — an unaffiliated, social media-driven event — is necessitating the precautionary closure. The annual event typically draws more than 1,000 boats and personal watercraft. With so many boats concentrated in such a small area for hours, federal and state public health guidance requires that the shellfish harvest area, which includes Potter’s Cove and adjacent waters, be closed to protect public health.

Although most recreational boaters follow [Rhode Island’s “No Discharge” law](#), a high concentration of vessels increases the chances of accidental or illicit discharge of sewage into shellfish waters. The precautionary closure will provide a sufficient volume of water and time for the dilution of inadvertently



discharged sewage before the area is reopened to shellfishing. There are currently 15 pump-out boats and 59 facilities located across Narragansett Bay and RI coastal waters. However, these facilities are not routinely in operation along the undeveloped north shore of Prudence Island. Some 40,000 boats are registered in Rhode Island, and the state welcomes many thousands more visiting boats each year. Last year, a total volume of over 600,000 gallons of sewage was pumped out at these facilities and diverted from directly entering Rhode Island's coastal waters. Visit DEM's website for a [map](#) of marine pumpout facilities in Rhode Island.

Closing shellfishing areas when warranted protects public health by ensuring that only quality, safe shellfish is harvested and enters the food system. 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. Such monitoring enables a quick response, including shellfish closures, when conditions indicate a change in water quality due to natural events such as [algae blooms](#) or unusual 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 shellfishing hotline at 401-222-2900 or sign up for DEM's Office of Water Resources' shellfishing listserv here: RIshellfishOWR-subscribe@listserve.ri.gov.

For more information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow [DEM on Facebook](#), Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM), or Instagram (@rhodeisland.dem) for timely updates.

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