



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

235 Promenade Street | Providence, RI 02908 | 401.222.4700 | www.dem.ri.gov | @RhodeIslandDEM

CONTACT:

Evan LaCross, 401-799-0100

DEM.communications@dem.ri.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Thursday, May 15, 2025

IMPROVED WATER QUALITY SHORTENS RAINFALL CLOSURES FOR SHELLFISH AREAS

PROVIDENCE, RI – Just in time for [Quahog Week](#), the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announces that rain-related shellfish closures have reduced from seven to six days for the Lower Providence River and Greenwich Bay shellfish conditional areas due to improved water quality. Closures will now last six days after 0.5” to 1.2” of rain in a 24-hour period. For heavier rainfall over 1.2”, the seven-day closure remains. These changes will add an average of ten additional days of harvesting each year.



DEM Environmental Scientist Olivia Chatowsky and Shellfish Water Quality Program Supervisor Dave Borkman collect water samples for testing.

“This is a water quality success story for our environment, Rhode Island’s quahoggers, and our food economy,” said Governor Dan McKee. “Clean water is at the center of our way of life in the Ocean State.”

“This change reflects ongoing water quality improvements in Narragansett Bay and our commitment to work collaboratively with the shellfishing industry,” said DEM Director Terry Gray. “By working together through infrastructure investments, science-based environmental laws, and state-local-federal cooperation leading to the cleaner waters, we can continue increasing access to RI’s shellfishing grounds.”

As a result of water quality improvements, [the Providence River conditionally approved shellfish area was opened for the first time in 75 years in 2021](#) with a seven-day closure management plan when there was 0.5” or more of rain in a 24-hour period. The Greenwich Bay shellfish conditional area has also had a seven-day closure management plan when there was 0.5” or more of rain in a 24-hour period for over 30 years. [DEM’s Office of Water Resources](#) (OWR), following a recent review of data found that water quality in shellfish areas returns to safe levels six days after moderate rainfall of 0.5” to 1.2” in a 24-hour period.

Telephone 401.222.4700 | www.dem.ri.gov | Rhode Island Relay 711

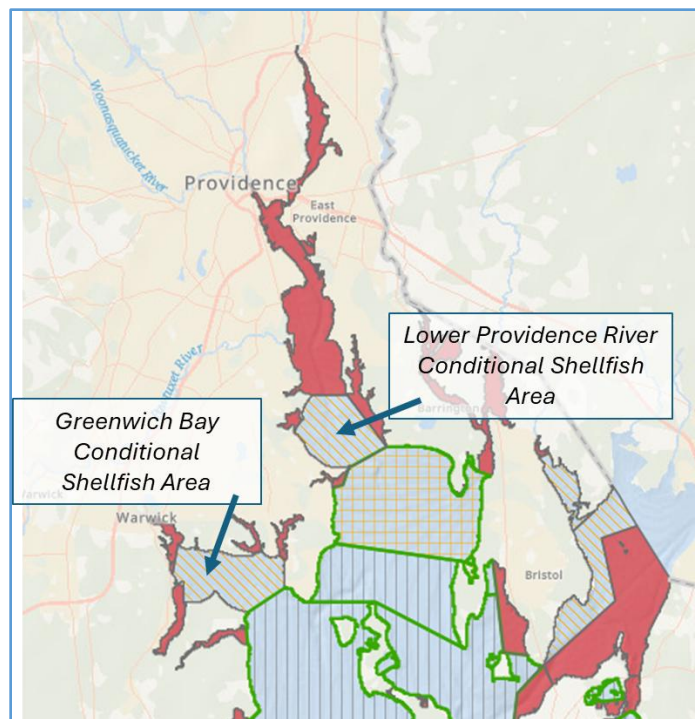
These positive results are due to long-term improvements like upgraded stormwater infrastructure, cesspool removal, and expanded sewer service.

This progress is the result of collaboration between DEM, the [Rhode Island Department of Health \(RIDOH\)](#), and the [RI Coastal Resources Management Council \(CRMC\)](#), and shellfishing partners, who work together to maintain Rhode Island’s reputation for a high-quality product through careful monitoring and stewardship.

For more information on 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 OWR’s 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/X (@RhodeIslandDEM), or Instagram (@rhodeisland.dem) for timely updates. [Sign up here](#) to receive the latest press releases, news, and events from DEM's Public Affairs Office to your inbox.



###