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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

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**DEC REOPENS REMAINING SHELLFISHING AREA IN
MOUNT SINAI HARBOR, SUFFOLK COUNTY**
Shellfishing May Resume in All Normally-Certified Portions of the Harbor

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today announced that shellfish harvesting may resume in all areas of Mount Sinai Harbor, in the Town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County, beginning immediately on Monday, Dec. 14, 2009. The re-opening now allows shellfishing to resume in approximately 445 acres of the Harbor. An area of 10 acres in the southern portion of the Harbor remains closed, as it is throughout the year.

All of Mount Sinai was closed by DEC on Nov. 20, as a precautionary measure after discovering elevated fecal coliform levels in oysters. A significant portion of the harbor was re-opened on Dec. 5.

The action to reopen was taken after DEC performed additional examinations of shellfish and water samples collected throughout Mount Sinai Harbor on Nov. 30, Dec. 7 and Dec. 11. Those tests determined that shellfish from the area that had remained closed, no longer had excessive levels of fecal coliform bacteria, which indicate that shellfish may be unsafe for human consumption.

DEC's field investigations into possible causes of contamination have not identified any source or sources of bacteria that led to the initial closure. Shellfisheries staff reviewed the sanitary survey and water quality data for Mount Sinai Harbor and conducted field inspections of the shoreline and did not find any new or transient pollution sources that may have caused the elevated fecal coliform levels in shellfish in the area. It is possible that those elevated coliform levels were a result of nonpoint source runoff following the high tides and extreme weather conditions as Tropical Storm Ida passed east of Long Island in early November and the abnormally high tides during the weekend of Nov. 14-15.

A recorded message advising harvesters of the status of this shellfish area may be heard by calling (631) 444-0480. For additional information about DEC's shellfish monitoring program, contact DEC staff at (631) 444-0475 or go to <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/345.html> on DEC's website.

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