

Closure Effective as of Sunrise on Friday, October 7

PROVIDENCE - The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) today announced several areas of Narragansett Bay will be closed to shellfish harvesting until further notice, effective at sunrise on Friday, October 7. The closure is due to a confirmed harmful algae bloom (HAB) caused by the presence of toxic phytoplankton. This is the first HAB-related shellfishing closure in Rhode Island.

Impacted waters include Narragansett Bay, Greenwich Bay, and all tributaries to those waters north of a line from the point just north of the Pettaquamscutt (Narrow) River at Cormorant Point to Beavertail Point in Jamestown to Brenton Point in Newport and south of a line from the Old Tower at Nayatt Point to the DEM range marker at Conimicut Point. At this time, the conditional areas of Mt. Hope Bay and the Kickemuit River are scheduled to reopen at noon on Saturday, October 8.

DEM regularly monitors local waters for the presence of phytoplankton that can produce harmful algae blooms. Samples collected by DEM and tested by the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) today confirmed a toxic bloom. Given the high concentrations of phytoplankton in several areas of Narragansett Bay and out of an abundance of caution, all portions of the Bay where these elevated levels were found are being closed to shellfish harvesting.

DEM, in partnership with RIDOH, has and will continue to collect local shellfish for analysis to determine if the toxins are present in shellfish meats at levels of concern. The toxin, known as domoic acid, produced by these phytoplankton is responsible for causing amnesiac shellfish poisoning (ASP) in humans. Symptoms of ASP include short- and long-term memory loss along with other serious health effects.

At this time, the harvest restriction does not apply to carnivorous such as whelk and moon snails. For updates on shellfish closure areas, contact the DEM 24-hour shellfishing hotline at 401-222-2900. For more information on DEM divisions and programs, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM or on Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM) for timely updates.