

## Massachusetts Closure

The ISSC was advised today of the following closure.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
August 26, 2015

FURTHER INFORMATION:  
Scott Zoback (DPH) 617-939-7718  
Katie Gronendyke (DMF) 617-626-1129

### **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES ISSUE PRECAUTIONARY CLOSURE OF OYSTER BEDS IN EDGARTOWN**

*Multiple cases of Vibrio linked to consumption of oysters harvested from the area*

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game's, Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) today issued a week-long precautionary closure of oyster beds (V:20) in Katama Bay in the community of Edgartown, MA effective August 26, 2015. This precautionary closure is due to three confirmed cases of vibrio linked to consumption of raw oysters from the area, and the presence of environmental conditions conducive to the growth of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (Vibrio) in oysters harvested from the area.

Harvesting and possession of shellfish from these areas for commercial purposes is prohibited for seven days with the issuance of this precautionary closure. Should more cases be confirmed, an extended US FDA-enforced closure could be issued. This is the first time a specific harvest area in Massachusetts has been closed due to Vibrio this year. The decision to issue a precautionary closure was made jointly between DPH and DMF officials in response to warming waters in Katama Bay, anticipated high air temperatures forecast for the coming days, and identification of a third confirmed case of Vibrio tied to the Katama Bay harvest area. In each of the cases, the individuals who consumed the raw oysters have recovered.

Vibrio is a bacteria that thrives in warmer temperatures, multiplying as water and ambient air temperatures increase. The more *Vibrio* present in oysters the greater the risk of infection. Current water temperatures in Katama Bay are consistent with water temperatures and environmental conditions that were associated with an increased occurrence for Vibrio illnesses in 2013 and 2014.

DPH and DMF have successfully partnered with industry to develop controls to mitigate risk of *Vibrio* associated with Massachusetts harvested oysters. A statewide *Vibrio* Control Plan has been in effect since 2013.

The *Vibrio* season in Massachusetts runs from May to October. Health officials are reminding all persons who are at high risk, especially those who are elderly or immune compromised, to avoid eating any raw shellfish.

## **BACKGROUND:**

*Vibrio* is a bacteria that occurs naturally in coastal waters in the United States and Canada. It has caused illnesses in the Gulf Coast and West Coast of the United States for a number of years. It is not related to pollution of Massachusetts shellfish.

When ingested, *Vibrio* causes watery diarrhea, often with abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever and chills. Usually these symptoms occur within 24 hours of ingestion and last three days. Severe illness, increased risk of infection, and serious complications, including death, may occur in the very young, elderly, pregnant women, and immune impaired individuals such as people with underlying medical issues, such as liver disease or alcoholism. About 10 percent of cases will develop a blood infection that may require hospitalization. *Vibrio* can also cause an infection of the skin when an open wound is exposed to warm seawater.

In 2012, the FDA recommended that DPH and DMF – the two state agencies with joint authority over shellfish sanitation and control – implement a *Vibrio* control plan for shellfish harvest and growing areas in Eastern Cape Cod Bay. Due to the increase in *Vibrio* cases in 2012, and continued reports of *Vibrio* among consumers reporting consumption of raw oysters in waters beyond Eastern Cape Cod Bay, the FDA advised Massachusetts to expand *Vibrio* controls to all oyster harvest areas in 2013.

More information on *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* is available [here](#).

###

**Scott Zoback** | Interim Director of Communications  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
T: 617.939.7718 | [scott.zoback@state.ma.us](mailto:scott.zoback@state.ma.us)



David E. Pierce PhD  
Acting Director

# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

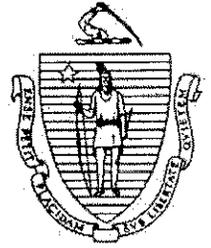
1213 Purchase St. 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

New Bedford, MA 02740

(508)990-2860

fax (508)990-0449

August 26, 2015



Charles D. Baker  
Governor

Karyn E. Polito  
Secretary

George Peterson, Jr.  
Commissioner

Board of Selectmen  
Town Hall  
Edgartown, MA 02539

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has confirmed three cases of **Vibrio parahaemolyticus** (*Vp*) tied to oysters harvested from V:20 Katama Bay in Edgartown. Oysters linked to the first illness were harvested from V:20 on July 7, 2015 and July 8, 2015, and consumed raw on July 8, 2015; oysters linked to the second illness were harvested from V:20 on July 6, 2015 and consumed raw on July 17, 2015, and; oysters linked to the third illness were harvested from V:20 on July 20, 2015 and consumed raw on July 26, 2015.

As a result, the Department of Public Health and the Division of Marine Fisheries are exercising their option at Section D. 5. of the 2015 Massachusetts Vp. Control Plan to institute a 7-day precautionary closure in order to prevent additional illnesses and protect public health.

In accordance with Chapter 130, section 74A of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Division of Marine Fisheries has determined that the below defined shellfish growing area, Katama Bay (V:20) in the Town of Edgartown no longer meets the established criteria for the commercial harvest of oysters.

Therefore, under authority of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 130, sections 74A, the below-defined area has been placed in a "Closed" status to the commercial harvest of oysters effective ½ hour after sunset on August 26, 2015. Commercially digging, harvesting or collecting and/or attempting to commercially dig, harvest or collect oysters and the possession of commercially harvested oysters from the below-defined areas is prohibited until the area is returned to the open status.

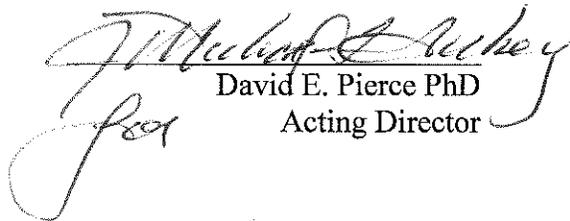
The status of the below defined area will automatically revert back to "Open" at sunrise on September 3, 2015 unless otherwise notified from this office.

**STATUS: CLOSED TO COMMERCIAL OYSTER HARVEST**

**Katama Bay**  
**V:20**

“The waters and flats and all tributaries of Katama Bay in the Town of Edgartown, south of a line drawn due west from Snows Point to the opposite shore.”

Under authority of 322 CMR 7.01 (7) all permits issued there under are hereby conditioned to prohibit the commercial taking, selling or possession of oysters from the above defined area.

  
David E. Pierce PhD  
Acting Director

CC: J. McGinn, P. Moran, ELE  
D. McKiernan, M. Hickey, T. Shields, J. Kennedy, DMF  
M. Moore, E. Hickey, DPH  
A. Fitzpatrick, FDA  
S. Bowen, DAR  
P. Bagnell, Edgartown Shellfish Constable  
C. Sherman, D. Ryan, K. Clark, Massachusetts Aquaculture Association  
DEP  
WPC