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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

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**DEC TEMPORARILY CLOSES SHELLFISHING AREAS
IN TOWN OF OYSTER BAY, NASSAU COUNTY
Closure Follows Reported Illnesses from Naturally-Occurring Bacteria**

The harvesting of shellfish from particular areas in the Town of Oyster Bay is temporarily prohibited, effective immediately, due to an illness outbreak caused by naturally occurring marine bacteria in shellfish, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced today.

The closure impacts approximately 1,980 acres on the north shore of the Town of Oyster Bay, including all the underwater lands in Oyster Bay Harbor that lie westerly of a line extending southerly from the stone house on Plum Point (Centre Island) to the northwestern most point of Cove Point on Cove Neck. To protect public health, all harvesting of shellfish from that area is prohibited until further notice. A map showing the affected areas will be available on the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7765.html>.

This action was taken after DEC and the New York State Department of Health (DOH) documented illnesses in three people who ate raw or partially cooked shellfish in Nassau County. DOH determined the illnesses were associated with the consumption of shellfish or foods which were cross contaminated with raw shellfish and DEC determined the source of the shellfish. An additional five illnesses were reported to DEC by three other states that received shellfish harvested in Oyster Bay Harbor.

Laboratory tests have determined that the illnesses were caused by the marine bacteria, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, a naturally-occurring marine bacterium generally associated with warm water conditions. *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* is not associated with sewage or stormwater contamination of harvest areas.

When ingested, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* may cause diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, often accompanied by abdominal cramps, fever and chills. Symptoms usually occur within 24 hours of ingestion and full recovery may take up to a week. More severe illness may occur in people with compromised immune systems or underlying chronic diseases. Consumers experiencing symptoms consistent with illness caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, and who have recently consumed raw shellfish, should contact their physician.

To prevent additional illnesses from occurring, DEC is prohibiting the harvest of shellfish from Oyster Bay Harbor, effective immediately. This closure will remain in effect until samples collected by DEC indicate that shellfish from the affected area are no longer a threat to consumers. No other harvest areas have been implicated in these *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* illnesses.

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Consumers possessing shellfish with tags listing Oyster Bay Harbor as the harvest area should not eat the shellfish.

All shellfish harvesters, shippers, re-shippers, processors, restaurants and retail food establishments are advised to check the identity tags on all containers of shellfish in their inventories. If the tag indicates the harvest area was Oyster Bay Harbor and had a harvest date before July 13, the product must not be sold.

Wholesale shellfish dealers should also check their sales records to determine whether they have handled or sold any shellfish from the affected harvest area from June 1 through July 12. If so, they should immediately contact any customers that may have received shellfish from the area and advise them not to sell or serve those shellfish. Any business or establishment that has shellfish from Oyster Bay Harbor is advised to call DEC's shellfisheries inspection program at (631) 444-0494.

Additionally, information about temporary shellfish closures is available through a recorded message at (631) 444-0480. That message is updated when changes are made to temporary closures.

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