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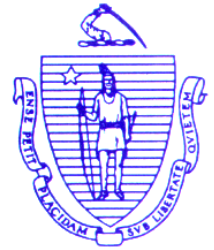
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March 5, 2018

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Statewide Shellfish Closure Update

DMF Shellfish Program is assessing the impacts on water quality and shellfish safety as a result of the Nor'east storm of March 2-4, 2018. The storm was a long duration event with three days (6 tidal cycles) of astronomical high tides and a storm surge that caused widespread coastal flooding, extreme erosion, and damage to coastal features, and structures. In some areas, septic systems were exposed by the erosion. Storm drains and sewage collection systems were inundated. Ordinarily, the Division would consider opening shellfish areas three days after a major storm event. Rain amounts ranged from 2 inches to over 6 inches in some locations with many areas receiving very close to the 4.0 inches that triggers an automatic closure based on rainfall alone. However, rain amounts are not the only factor taken into consideration in determining the duration of this closure. Rain intensity, coastal flooding and waste water treatment plant operation are also factors.

DMF is not confident that a Tuesday shellfish opening is appropriate. The situation is further complicated by the forecast of another Nor'easter beginning on Wednesday morning. It is unlikely that shellfish areas will be opened prior to the start of the Wednesday storm.

We will continue to monitor the situation and reopen shellfish areas as soon as possible.