



**David E. Pierce**  
Director

# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

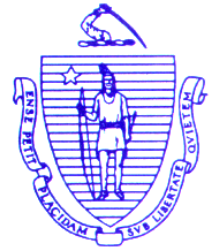
## Division of Marine Fisheries

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April 5, 2016

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

## Shellfish Area N2.1 in Newbury Reopens

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The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) in cooperation with the Town of Newbury, is pleased to announce the reopening of Newbury Shellfish Area N2.1 in the Merrimack and Plum Island Rivers estuaries, to the Conditionally Restricted commercial harvest of softshell clams (*Mya arenaria*) for depuration. Once considered among the top clam producing flats in Massachusetts, bacterial contamination had shut down these highly productive beds for the last 30 years. A new, comprehensive Contaminated Area Management Plan developed with the Town of Newbury, combined with restrictive state and local harvesting regulations, will ensure clams harvested from the area are safe for human consumption.

Results of a Sanitary Survey of the area indicate rainfall produces intermittent and predictable events of bacterial contamination in excess of established national standards. Accordingly, DMF is required to close the area to shellfishing for 5 to 7 days after rainfalls of 1/4" or more. Rainfall of 1/2" or more will prohibit shellfishing for an extended period subject to re-sampling.

Under the conditional restricted nature of the reopening only the harvesting of clams by specially licensed individuals will be allowed. Due to mild to moderate levels of bacterial contamination during dry weather periods, all clams harvested must be "cleansed" (depurated) at the Division's Shellfish Purification Plant on Plum Island, Newburyport. Softshell clams and other bivalve mollusks become contaminated by filtering both harmless and pathogenic (disease causing) bacteria and viruses from seawater in the process of feeding and respiration. Contaminated shellfish can transmit these organisms to people if the shellfish are eaten raw or under-cooked. In order to be safely consumed these shellfish must first be purged of the harmful organisms. Depuration is designed to purge mildly contaminated shellfish of bacterial contamination to an extent shellfish are safe to eat.

ONLY softshell clams may be harvested by DMF specially permitted Master Diggers and their employees, called Subordinate Diggers from moderately contaminated areas. The Master buys the clams from subordinates at the landing site. The clams are then placed in plastic boxes called racks, loaded onto refrigerated trucks, then transported to the depuration plant on Plum Island via the prescribed route.

Upon arrival at the Shellfish Purification Plant, the clams are placed on pallets, then lowered into one of nine, 3500 gallon tanks. Tanks are filled with clean salt water from two 130' deep wells.

Depuration is a self-cleansing process where the shellfish purge their digestive system of particulates as seawater is continuously re-circulated and sterilized by ultraviolet lamps. Clams and tank seawater are tested daily for indicator bacteria at the Shellfish Plant Laboratory. Typically, after 2½ to 3 days the shellfish are clean. The softshell clams are then returned to the diggers who sell them to Massachusetts wholesale shellfish dealers for processing and/or resale. Recreational harvesting and the harvest for direct human consumption remains prohibited.

The reopening encompasses approximately 215 acres of the Plum Island River and northern approaches south of Woodbridge Island, as well as most of the Basin on Plum Island. These Newbury flats will join over 1000 acres of Merrimack River estuary clam flats in Newburyport and Salisbury, reopened in 2006 and 2013.

Please contact the Newbury Shellfish Constable for all Town requirements. For further information on DMF rules and regulations please contact: Jeff Kennedy at 978-465-3553 or Dave Roach at 978-282-0308.

[www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries)