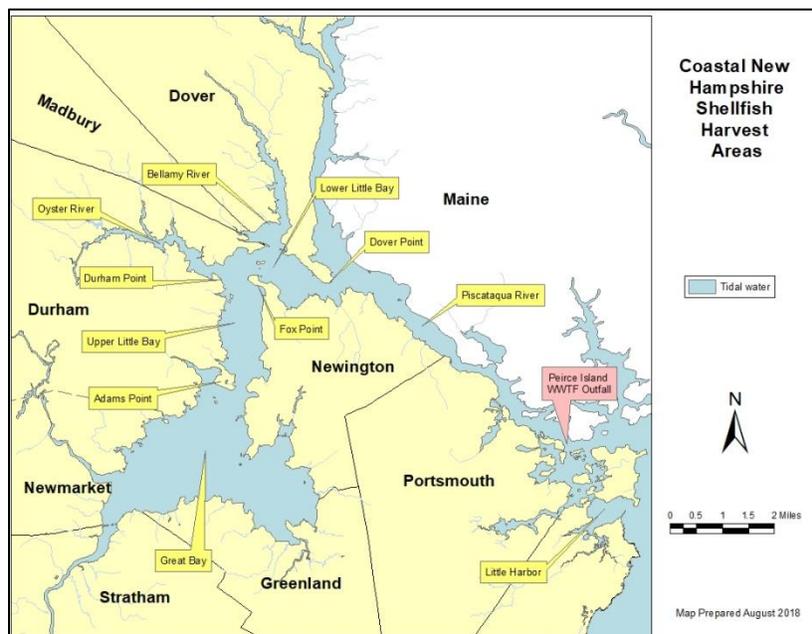


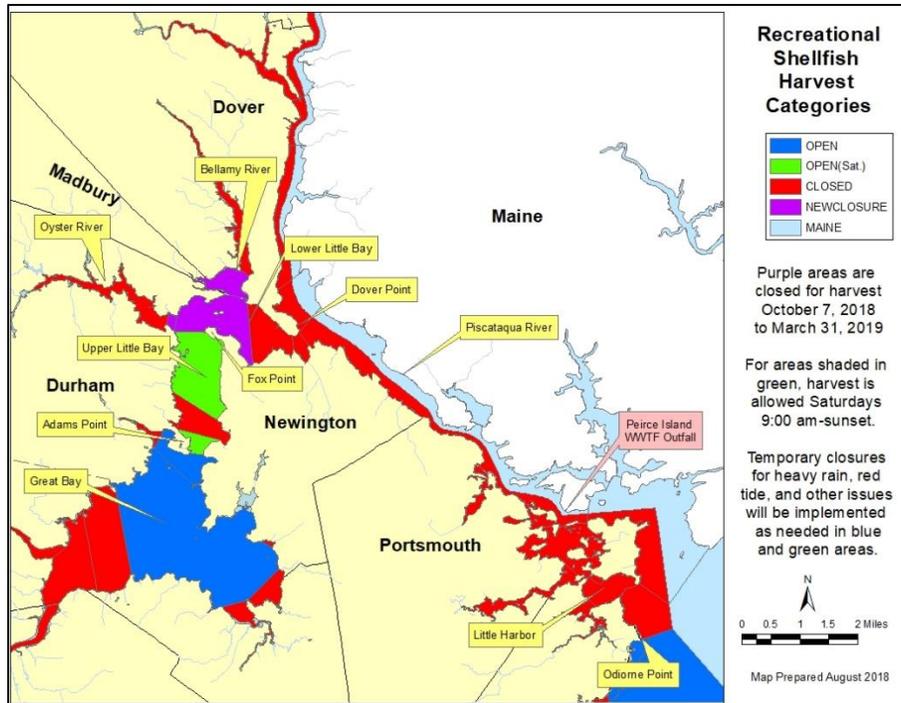
NH Department of Environmental Services and NH Fish and Game Announce Changes to Shellfish Harvest Rules in Little Bay and the Bellamy River from October 2018 through March 2019

New Harvest Closures, Lower Little Bay and Bellamy River: Due to recent findings from a multi-year study of water quality impacts from the Portsmouth, NH, wastewater treatment facility, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and New Hampshire Fish and Game (NHF&G) announce a change to areas available for shellfish harvest in Little Bay and the Bellamy River. Effective October 7, 2018, the waters of the Bellamy River, as well as the waters of Lower Little Bay (Fox Point/Durham Point to Dover Point) will be subject to a new seasonal closure for recreational and commercial shellfish harvest. This seasonal closure will be in effect from October 7, 2018 until March 31, 2019. Weather conditions permitting, these waters will reopen for recreational and commercial harvest on April 1, 2019.



Upper Little Bay and Great Bay Not Affected: This new closure does not affect commercial shellfish harvesting in the waters of Upper Little Bay (Fox Point/Durham Point to Adams Point). Likewise, recreational shellfish harvest in Upper Little Bay will continue to be allowed Saturdays, 9 a.m. to sunset. As always, areas available to harvest are subject to temporary closures due to heavy rainfall, short-term noncompliance at a wastewater treatment facility and other pollution-related conditions.

Recreational harvest in Great Bay is also not affected by these new seasonal closures. Harvest in these areas will continue to be allowed, subject to temporary closures, seven days a week (note that softshell clam harvest is only allowed on Saturdays, from the first Saturday after Labor Day until the last Saturday in May, and oyster harvesting is not allowed in July and August).



Why the New Closures are Necessary: In December 2012, NHDES, with assistance from the City of Portsmouth and other state/federal agencies, conducted a hydrographic dye study of Portsmouth’s Peirce Island municipal wastewater treatment facility. The study simulated a disinfection failure at the facility by injecting a red dye into wastewater effluent entering the Piscataqua River. Results of the study showed that such a disinfection failure would pose harm to the water quality in Little Bay and the Bellamy River very quickly. Such a scenario is a potential public health risk to those harvesting and consuming filter-feeding shellfish in the area. Oysters, mussels and clams could accumulate dangerous levels of disease-causing microorganisms in the improperly treated sewage. Consequently, recreational harvesting in these areas was restricted to Saturday only, 9 a.m. to sunset.

The December 2012 study revealed another public health issue with effluent from the wastewater treatment facility. The facility is not employing advanced wastewater treatment (the Portsmouth facility is currently building a new, modern treatment facility, scheduled for spring 2020). The study found very high levels of virus indicator in effluent discharged to the Piscataqua River, much higher than what is discharged from other Seacoast facilities. This prompted NHDES, with cooperation from the City of Portsmouth and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, to begin examining how virus levels vary throughout the year in the effluent, in Piscataqua River and Little Bay seawater, and in shellfish tissues throughout the estuary.

The multiyear study showed that virus particles are present throughout the year in the effluent, but because of the effects of various summertime factors like sunlight/ultraviolet radiation, viruses do not persist in the environment during the warmer months. However, as fall transitions to early winter, the virus particles from the effluent do persist in the seawater entering Little Bay. The tests on the shellfish tissues from multiple years confirm that the shellfish accumulate the virus particles in their tissues at significant levels. Furthermore,

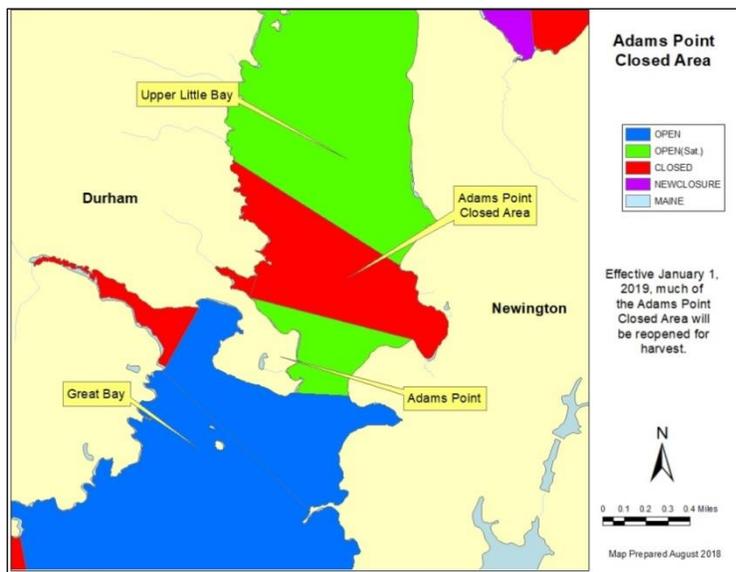
shellfish tend to retain the accumulated virus over the winter because of reduced feeding/filtering activity in the cold water temperatures.

NHDES has determined that the virus levels in seawater entering Little Bay are 50-100 times higher than levels currently allowed under the National Shellfish Sanitation Program, during a time of year when shellfish are actively feeding and accumulating virus particles. This presents an unacceptable public health risk for those who would eat those shellfish, particularly in mid-fall, winter, and early spring months.

Thus, effective October 7, 2018, the waters of the Bellamy River, as well as the waters of Lower Little Bay (Fox Point/Durham Point to Dover Point) will be closed for recreational and commercial shellfish harvest. This seasonal closure will be in effect from October 7, 2018 until March 31, 2019. Weather conditions permitting, these conditionally approved areas will reopen for recreational and commercial harvest on April 1, 2019.

A similar seasonal closure will be put into effect for the October 2019-March 2020 time period.

Improvements Coming: The City of Portsmouth is currently building a new advanced wastewater treatment facility. Construction is scheduled for completion December 2019, with the plant fully operational by April 2020. NHDES expects virus levels in the effluent to be much lower once the new plant is operational and will conduct extensive testing at that time. When the upgrade is complete and testing is done, NHDES will reassess the public health risks and modify harvesting classifications accordingly.



New Areas to Open January 2019:

Although shellfish harvesters will temporarily lose some opportunities for harvest in the Bellamy and Lower Little Bay for part of the next two years, NHDES is pleased to announce an expansion of the areas open for harvest in Upper Little Bay. Effective January 1, 2019, the large 230-acre closed area just north of Adams Point will be substantially reduced in size, opening new acres of harvest area.

*For information about open seasons for various shellfish species, go to <http://www.eregulations.com/newhampshire/fishing/saltwater/shellfish/>

For updated information on what shellfish areas are open for harvest, consult the Clam Flat hotline (1-800-43-CLAMS) and the NH Coastal Atlas (<https://www4.des.state.nh.us/CoastalAtlas/Atlas.html>)