

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**For More Information Contact**

A.J. Hostetler, (804) 864-7553

## **VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CLOSES BAY TRIBUTARIES TO SHELLFISH HARVESTING**

(RICHMOND, Va.)— The Virginia Department of Health announced today that all tributaries to Virginia's portion of the Chesapeake Bay are closed to shellfish harvesting due to severe weather associated with Tropical Depression Ida. The emergency closure is effective today through Nov. 18, 2009.

The emergency closure also includes:

- Eastern Shore bayside tributaries
- Eastern Shore seaside tributaries west of and including the intracoastal waterway
- All but the center portion of the lower James River, from Burwell Bay to the Monitor-Merrimac Memorial Bridge

A map of the affected areas is posted at [www.vdh.virginia.gov/Shellfish/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/Shellfish/). The affected shellfish are bivalve mollusks including oysters, clams and scallops, but not crabs or fin fish.

“Monitoring shellfish harvesting beds is an important means to protect the health of Virginians,” said State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA. “We watch shellfish beds for contaminants after major storms to ensure any seafood harvested there does not contain harmful substances that will make consumers of these shellfish ill.”

Heavy rainfall and tidal flooding from the tropical depression in upland areas may wash animal waste and human sewage into the Chesapeake Bay. Due to potential microbiological and chemical pollution hazards, shellfish taken from areas affected by the emergency closure are currently unacceptable for consumption.

Ingesting shellfish taken from the closed areas at this time could cause gastrointestinal illnesses including norovirus, hepatitis A and shigellosis.

For more information on shellfish closures, see the frequently asked questions on shellfish condemnations at [www.vdh.virginia.gov/EnvironmentalHealth/Shellfish/faq/index.htm](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/EnvironmentalHealth/Shellfish/faq/index.htm).

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