

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VDH CLOSSES SELECTED BAY TRIBUTARIES TO SHELLFISH HARVESTING

(RICHMOND, Va.)— The Virginia Department of Health announced today that selected tributaries to Virginia’s portion of the Chesapeake Bay will remain closed to shellfish harvesting due to last week’s severe weather. The emergency closure is effective Nov. 19 through Dec. 2, 2009.

The emergency closure includes:

- Cockrell Creek
- Totuskey Creek
- Waters bordering the Chesapeake Bay from York County to and including the city of Hampton
- Waters of Hampton Roads and the lower James River
- Lynnhaven River watershed

A map of the affected areas is posted at www.vdh.virginia.gov/Shellfish/. The affected shellfish are bivalve mollusks including oysters, clams and scallops, but not crabs or fin fish. This emergency closure revises a broader emergency closure issued Nov. 12 and allows most of the affected area to re-open.

“Monitoring shellfish harvesting beds after major storms is an important means to protect the health of Virginians,” said State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA. “Although the remnants of Tropical Depression Ida and the recent nor’easter have passed, we are continuing to monitor shellfish beds to ensure any seafood harvested there does not contain harmful substances that will make consumers of these shellfish ill.”

The recent storm’s heavy rainfall caused wastewater to overflow into Chesapeake Bay tributaries. 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.