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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REVISES JAMES AND RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER  
SHELLFISH CLOSURES**

(Richmond, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health announced today that the existing shellfish closures in the James and Rappahannock Rivers have been revised opening large portions of areas previously closed for shellfish harvesting. The effective dates of these revised emergency shellfish closures are February 4, 2010 for the Rappahannock River and February 5, 2010 for the James River.

The closings were in response to the flooding caused by heavy rainfall January 24-25, 2010, in southwest Virginia which may have washed debris and animal waste into the water. “These portions of the James and Rappahannock Rivers will remain closed for shellfish harvesting until test results indicate they are safe to reopen,” said State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA.

Due to potential microbiological and chemical pollution hazards, shellfish taken from these portions of the James and Rappahannock Rivers are presently unacceptable for direct marketing. Ingesting shellfish taken from these areas at this time could cause gastrointestinal illnesses including norovirus, hepatitis A, and shigella.

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

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