

Introduction

Maryland Department of the Environment Closed Areas

In conformity with the Annotated Code of Maryland, Natural Resources Article, Section 4-742, the maps in this publication summarize the Maryland Department of the Environment’s (MDE) classification status of oyster & clam harvesting waters as of June 1, 2019. As required under Annotated Code of Maryland, Natural Resources Article, Section 4-1006.2 the maps also specifically depict the status of MDE closed areas as of June 1, 2019. For the most current status information visit MDE’s web site www.mde.state.md.us or contact MDE’s Water and Science Administration at (410) 537-3818.

The maps generally depict the classification of shellfish waters of the State: restricted, conditionally approved, or approved. Detailed descriptions, including the map coordinates for all classifications can be found in Section 2 of this publication. Restricted means that no direct harvesting of oysters and clams is allowed at any time. Harvest from restricted areas (private leases and/or aquaculture only) is permitted by request for the purpose of natural cleansing (relay). Request for relay of oysters or clams from restricted waters to approved waters must be made in writing to MDE in advance of possible relay dates. Relay can occur only outside of oyster season and when water temperatures are above 50°F. Conditionally approved means that oysters and clams can be directly harvested except for the three days following a rainfall of an inch or greater in twenty-four hours. Harvesters are notified of conditional closings daily by an announcement broadcast by the Maryland Natural Resources Police made at 5, 6, and 7 a.m. on VHF radio band 14, by calling toll free 1-800-541-1210, or by visiting MDE’s web site daily advisory on conditionally approved shellfish areas at <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Marylander/fishandshellfish/Pages/shellfishadvisory>. Approved means oysters and clams may be harvested any time that is consistent with the Department of Natural Resources harvesting regulations.

Because of scale and map resolution, two critical categories are not represented on the maps. A small portion of Maryland’s oyster and clam harvesting waters are classified as prohibited. Shellfish may not be legally taken from waters classified as prohibited for any purpose because of the high potential for contamination. In addition, near-shore areas (shallow waters up to approximately 200 feet from shore) may appear as approved on the map because of inadequate resolution. These waters may be unmonitored and therefore unclassified as well as unsuitable for harvesting until they are monitored and classified as restricted, conditionally approved, or approved. Interested persons should contact MDE to determine the classification of all near-shore waters.

Maryland is a member state of the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP), which is a federal/state cooperative program recognized by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) for the sanitary control of shellfish produced and sold for human consumption. MDE uses the bacteriological standards as set forth in the NSSP for shellfish harvesting area classifications based on bacteriological water quality and sanitary survey. In addition to shoreline surveys that assess potential and actual pollution sources and risk, the bacteriological fecal coliform standards that must be met for each classification are listed below:

NSSP Classification	Fecal Coliform Standard
Approved/Conditionally Approved (direct harvest permitted)	Median \leq 14 MPN/ 100ml 90 th Percentile <49
Restricted (relay required)	Median \leq 88 MPN/ 100ml 90 th Percentile <300
Prohibited (no harvest permitted)	Median > 88 MPN/ 100 ml 90 th Percentile > 300