



## Energy and Environmental Affairs

EEA Home > Shellfish Harvest Closure in Buzzards Bay & Mount Hope

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### Division of Marine Fisheries Issues Shellfish Harvest Closure in Buzzards Bay and Mount Hope Bay

**BOSTON** – October 7, 2016 – The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has banned the harvesting of shellfish in Buzzards Bay, Mount Hope Bay and Lackeys Bay due to a substantial bloom of a potentially toxic kind of phytoplankton termed *Pseudo-Nitzschia*. Buzzards Bay and Lackeys Bay are closed to shellfish harvesting effective at sunrise on Saturday, October 8, 2016, and Mount Hope Bay is closed to shellfish harvesting effective immediately. As a result of the closure, digging, harvesting, collecting and/or attempting to dig, harvest or collect shellfish, and the possession of shellfish, is prohibited in Bourne, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Falmouth, Gosnold, Marion, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Swansea and Westport.

Phytoplankton samples collected by DMF on October 6, 2016 indicated extremely high concentrations of *Pseudo-Nitzschia* throughout Buzzards Bay. Though the necessary testing has not yet been conducted in Mount Hope Bay, a precautionary closure has been issued because a *Pseudo-Nitzschia* bloom is present and testing results by the state of Rhode Island in nearby Narragansett Bay indicate that the phytoplankton *Pseudo-nitzschia spp* is producing toxins.

*Pseudo-Nitzschia* can produce domoic acid, a biotoxin that concentrates in filter feeding shellfish. Shellfish containing high concentrations of domoic acid can cause Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning (ASP) with symptoms that include vomiting, cramps, diarrhea and incapacitating headaches followed by confusion, disorientation, permanent loss of short-term memory, and in severe cases, seizures and coma.

Throughout the weekend, DMF staff will continue testing the waters of Vineyard Sound, Nantucket Sound and Cape Cod Bay for the presence of *Pseudo-nitzschia spp*. Additional testing of phytoplankton and shellfish for domoic acid concentrations will be carried out within areas of the coast where significant *Pseudo-Nitzschia* blooms are detected.

Based on the results of further testing, DMF will reopen areas once the phytoplankton bloom has dissipated and shellfish are known to be free of toxic levels of domoic acid. The closure will not affect the harvest of whelks, bay scallops or sea scallops for purposes of extracting and selling or consuming the adductor muscle.

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