



Northeast Region Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

For Information Contact:
Sustainable Fisheries Division
(978) 281 – 9315

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/>
Date Issued: 8/15/2013

Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Fishery

Effective Date: August 16, 2013

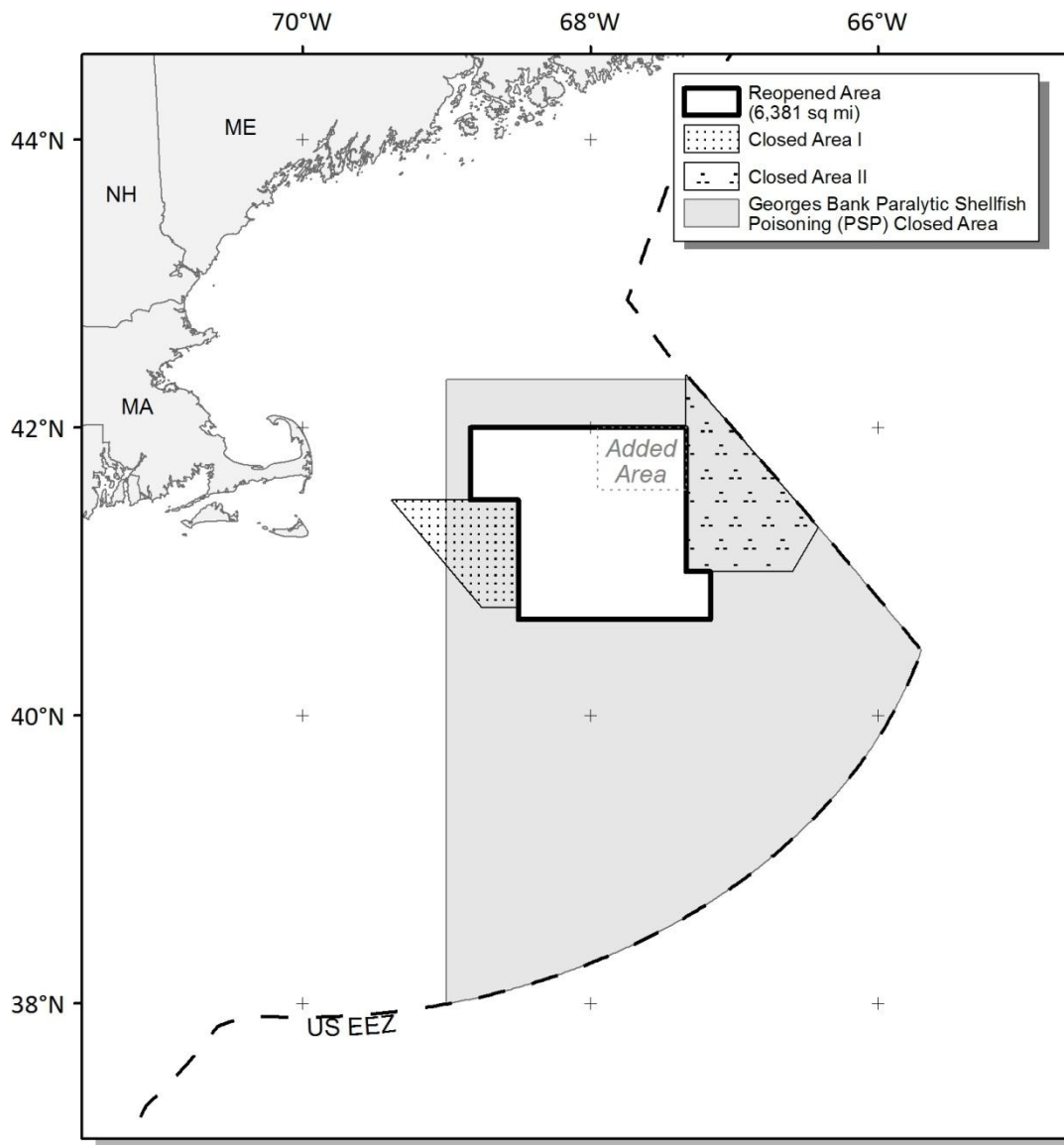
An additional portion of the Georges Bank Closed Area is reopened for Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog harvesting. A map of the area and the coordinates are provided in this bulletin. Please note that the area being shown includes the newly reopened area, as well as a separate area that was previously reopened on January 1, 2013. In addition to the requirements of the traditional Atlantic surfclam/ocean quahog fishery, to fish any portion of the reopened area, a vessel must also do the following:

1. Obtain a letter of authorization (LOA) from NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The LOA must be carried onboard for all trips into the area. The LOA application will be sent out annually in your permit renewal package or it can be obtained by calling the Permits Division at (978) 282-8438; and
2. The vessel must adhere to the terms and conditions of the testing protocol as adopted into the National Shellfish Sanitation Program by the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference. All surfclams and ocean quahogs harvested from the area must be handled in accordance with the terms and conditions of the protocol from the first point of harvest through completion of testing and release by the State Shellfish Control Authority (SSCA). A copy of the protocol is attached for your reference and is also located at www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/clams/ApprovedProtocol.pdf; and
3. Submit to NMFS a document from the SSCA detailing that the state where you intend to land will accept your vessel's landings. Please note that the SSCA may also require you to develop an agreement of understanding with the state, outlining any additional requirements the state may have; and
4. Develop and submit to NMFS a written onboard lot segregation plan. The SSCA in the intended state of landing and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must approve the proposed lot segregation plan. The plan must also be maintained onboard the vessel conducting the harvesting; and
5. Prior to leaving port at the start of a fishing trip, the vessels' owner or operator must declare its intent to fish in the area by calling the Northeast Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Team at (978) 281-9274. The vessels' owner or operator must also declare either an Atlantic surfclam or ocean quahog trip through the vessel's VMS unit. In the future, VMS codes will be developed that are specific to the Reopened Portion of the Closed Area. In the meantime, vessels will have to declare their intent to fish in the area by calling the Northeast VMS Team at the start of a trip as well as declaring an Atlantic surfclam or ocean quahog trip on their VMS unit.

For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Region.

Frequently Asked Questions

Wasn't this area already reopened?	No, but another area was reopened for the same purpose. On January 1, 2013, NMFS reopened a larger portion of the Georges Bank Closed Area. At that time, this newly reopened area was considered as well, but was not reopened. After reviewing public input on this additional area, we are now also reopening the area as original proposed. Therefore, the entire area displayed in the image on the next page is now reopened for Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog harvesting.
Can I fish both outside and inside the area on the same trip?	Yes, but you must declare your intent to fish in the reopened area through your VMS unit, and you will be held to the terms and conditions of the testing protocol for the entire trip, including fishing activity that is conducted outside of the reopened area.
How do I get more information on the requirements in the protocol?	You should contact your state's Shellfish Sanitation Control Authority for more information on how your state handles harvesting conducted under the conditions of the protocol.
Are there any of the areas where the protocol is not required?	No. The protocol is required on all trips into any portion of the reopened area.
What if I harvest shellfish that the protocol deems unsafe for human consumption?	Part N of the protocol requires that you immediately contact the U.S. FDA and your state's SSCA.



Reopened Portion of the Georges Bank Closed Area

Point	Latitude	Longitude
1	42°00'	68°50'
2	42°00'	67°20'
3	41°00'	67°20'
4	41°00'	67°10'
5	40°40'	67°10'
6	40°40'	68°30'
7	41°30'	68°30'
8	41°30'	68°50'
1	42°00'	68°50'

ATTACHMENT I

Section IV Guidance Documents Chapter II. Growing Areas .03 Example of Protocol for Onboard Screening and Dockside Testing for PSP in Closed Federal Waters

Protocol for the Landing of Shellfish from Federally Closed Waters due to PSP

When the harvest of molluscan shellfish is closed in Federal Waters due to Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP), exceptions to the prohibitions may be authorized provided the Authority in the State of landing in cooperation with appropriate Federal agencies shall develop agreements or memorandums of understanding between the Authority and individual shellfish harvesters or individual shellfish dealers. This guidance provides descriptions of the specific information to be included in the protocol.

A. Harvest Permit Requirements

The Authority in the landing state will only allow the landing of shellfish from federal waters closed due to PSP from vessels in possession of an appropriate Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The NMFS shall receive concurrence from the SSCA in the State of landing.

B. Training

The Authority shall ensure that all shipboard persons conducting onboard sampling have been trained by a National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) Laboratory Evaluation Officer (LEO) or a US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) marine biotoxin expert to conduct onboard PSP screening using a NSSP recognized method(s).

C. Vessel Monitoring

The Authority shall ensure that the harvesting location(s) of each landing vessel has been appropriately monitored. This requirement may be met by the vessel participating in the Federal Vessel Monitoring System (VMS).

D. Identification of Shellfish

Prior to landing each vessel shall provide the Authority with a record identifying each lot of shellfish as follows: For each harvesting trip the Captain or Mate shall record the following information on a "Harvest Record." Electronic logging of this information may be permitted provided it is made available to the authorized individual at dockside.

1. Vessel name and Federal Fishing Permit number
2. Name and telephone number of the vessel Captain and vessel owner
3. Date(s) of harvest
4. Number of lots and volume of catch per lot or number of containers per lot
5. Location(s) of harvest (GPS coordinates or latitude/longitude coordinates in degrees:minutes:seconds)
6. Identification of each harvest lot, including cage tag numbers for surfclams and ocean quahogs, and container numbers or identification codes for other shellfish species.

7. Location (GPS coordinates or latitude/longitude coordinates in degrees:minutes:seconds) of each PSP screening sample
8. Results of each PSP screening test.
9. Destination(s) and purchaser(s) of each lot and amount of each lot to each destination

The Captain or Mate shall sign the “Harvest Record.” The “Harvest Record” shall be checked by the individual authorized to sample the harvested shellfish. Failure to provide complete and accurate information will result in revocation or suspension of the NMFS EFP and rejection of the entire lot(s) of harvested shellfish. Four (4) copies of the “Harvest Record” shall be prepared. One (1) copy shall remain with the vessel, one (1) copy shall be provided to the SSCA in the state of landing, one (1) copy shall accompany the catch to the processing firm(s), and one (1) copy shall be retained by the laboratory authorized to conduct lot sample analyses.

CONTAINER LABELING:

Each container of shellfish shall be clearly labeled with the following NSSP required information at the time of harvest:

1. For surfclams and ocean quahogs existing NMFS tagging requirements
2. For all other molluscan shellfish (including Stimpson clams also known as Arctic surfclams) using Tyvek tags:
 - a. Vessel name
 - b. Type and quantity of shellfish
 - c. Date of harvest
 - d. Harvest lot area defined by GPS coordinates or latitude/longitude coordinates in degrees:minutes:seconds

E. Pre-Harvest Sampling

Prior to commercial harvesting of molluscan shellfish, a minimum of five (5) screening samples shall be collected within each area of intended harvest (lot area) and tested for PSP toxins in accordance with a NSSP recognized screening method. Each screening sample shall be collected during a separate and distinct gear tow. Screening sample tows shall be conducted in a manner that evenly distributes the five (5) samples throughout the intended harvest area for each area of intended harvest (see Section H.). Only shipboard officials trained in the use of the designated NSSP screening method may conduct these tests. Each of the five (5) samples must test negative for PSP toxins. A positive result from any one (1) sample shall render the “lot area” unacceptable for harvest. The harvest vessel captain shall immediately report all positive screening test results, by telephone, to the SSCA within the intended state of landing and the NMFS. The Captain should also notify other permitted harvest vessels of the positive screening test and advise them to avoid the questionable area. For each screening test, positive and negative, the remaining sample material (homogenate) shall be maintained under refrigeration for later use should the SSCA in the State of landing request confirmatory testing using a NSSP recognized test method.

Each screening sample shall be comprised of at least twelve (12) whole animals with the exception of mussels and “whole” or “roe-on” scallops. For mussels each sample shall be comprised of thirty (30) animals. For “whole” scallops each sample shall be comprised of twenty (20) scallop viscera and gonads. For “roe-on” scallops each sample shall be comprised of twenty (20) scallop gonads.

F. Submittal of Onboard Screening Homogenates and Test Results

All screening results shall be recorded on the “Harvest Record” as stipulated in Section D of this Protocol. Upon landing of the harvest vessel, the “Harvest Record” and screening homogenates shall be provided to the authority in the State of landing authorized to sample the harvested shellfish as described in Section G. of this Protocol.

G. Dockside Sampling

After dockside samples are collected, molluscan shellfish may be processed while awaiting PSP analytical results. Each lot must be identified and segregated during storage while awaiting dockside sample test results. Under no circumstances will product be released from the processor prior to receiving satisfactory paralytic shellfish toxin test results.

The dockside sampling protocol for molluscan shellfish shall be as follows:

1. For each lot of molluscan shellfish, a minimum of seven (7) composite samples, each comprised of at least twelve (12) whole animals, shall be taken at random by the individual authorized to sample, with the following exceptions:
 - a. For each lot of mussels, a minimum of seven (7) composite samples, each comprised of at least thirty (30) whole animals, shall be taken at random by the individual authorized to sample.
 - b. For each lot of “whole” scallops, a minimum of seven (7) composite samples, each comprised of twenty (20) scallop viscera and gonads, shall be taken at random by the individual authorized to sample.
 - c. For each lot of “roe-on” scallops, a minimum of seven (7) composite samples, each comprised of twenty (20) scallop gonads, shall be taken at random by the individual authorized to sample.
2. Shellfish samples collected in accordance with G.1 shall be tested for the presence of paralytic shellfish toxins using NSSP recognized methods.
3. Laboratory test results for each lot of shellfish shall be forwarded to the SSCA in the state in which the shellfish is being held prior to the product being released by the SSCA.

H. Holding and Lot Separation

A harvest lot is defined as all molluscan shellfish harvested during a single period of uninterrupted harvest activity within a geographic area not to exceed three (3) square miles. Once harvesting has ceased and the harvest vessel moves to another location, regardless of the distance, a new harvest lot will be established. Any harvest vessel containing more than one lot shall clearly mark and segregate each lot while at sea, during off loading, and during transportation to a processing facility. Prior to harvesting in Federal waters, each harvest vessel shall submit to the NMFS a written onboard lot segregation plan. The SSCA in the intended state of landing and the FDA Regional Shellfish Specialist must approve the proposed lot segregation plan.

I. Disposal of Shellfish

If test results of any one (1) of the seven (7) samples collected in accordance with G.1 equal or exceed 80ug of paralytic shellfish toxins/100g of shellfish tissue ($n=7, c=0$), the entire lot must be discarded or destroyed at the cost of the harvester under the supervision of the SSCA in accordance with state laws and regulations except when:

A lot of “whole” or “roe-on” scallops equals or exceeds 80ug paralytic shellfish toxins/100g of tissue, the adductor muscle may be shucked from the viscera and/or gonad and marketed. The remaining materials (viscera and/or gonad) must be discarded or destroyed under supervision of the SSCA in accordance with state laws and regulations.

Confirmatory PSP analyses shall be according to NSSP recognized methods and shall be conducted by laboratories certified in accordance with NSSP guidelines. Private laboratories may be used if certified by a Federal or state shellfish Laboratory Evaluation Officer (LEO) in accordance with NSSP guidelines.

J. Notification Prior to Unloading

Prior to the issuance of an EFP, the harvester shall be responsible for notifying the SSCA in the state of landing and in a manner approved by the SSCA that molluscan shellfish is being harvested for delivery to the intended receiving processor.

Each vessel shall give at least twelve (12) hours notice to the individual authorized to sample prior to unloading shellfish. Notice of less than twelve (12) hours may be approved by the authorized individual at his/her discretion. SSCAs may approve industry sampling and sample transport to the NSSP certified testing laboratory in accordance with the practices and procedures used by the SSCA under the NSSP. Such procedures may be approved by the SSCA only when sample collection and sample transport training is provided by the SSCA.

Shellfish from a federally closed harvest area must be kept separate and not sold until so authorized by the SSCA. Failure to comply with the provisions of this Protocol will result in the suspension or revocation of the vessel's EFP.

K. Unloading Schedule

Unloading shall take place between 7:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon by the individual authorized to sample, the processing plant manager, the harvest vessel captain, and the SSCA in the state of landing, sample testing, and processing.

L. Access for Dockside Sampling

Individuals authorized to sample shall be provided access to the catch of shellfish.

M. Record Keeping

Record keeping requirements shall be as follows:

1. The vessel shall maintain Harvest Records for at least one (1) year.
2. The processor(s) shall maintain Harvest Records for at least one (1) year or two (2) years if the product is frozen.
3. The SSCA in the State of landing shall retain Harvest Records for at least two (2) years.

N. Early Warning/Alert System

PSP sample data acquired as a result of onboard screening and dockside testing shall be transmitted to a central data register to be maintained by the FDA. These data, both screening and confirmatory, shall be transmitted to the FDA by the NSSP certified laboratory conducting PSP analyses of the sampled lot(s) within one week of the completion of the PSP analyses. The data provided shall include the following:

1. shellfish species
2. harvest location name and coordinates (GPS or latitude/longitude)
3. harvest date
4. onboard screening test method, date, and results

5. laboratory test date and test results

Results of all samples having acceptable levels of paralytic shellfish toxins (<80ug/100g) shall immediately be reported to the SSCA in the state of landing. If the results of any one (1) sample equal or exceed 80ug/100g the testing laboratory shall immediately notify the FDA Regional Shellfish Specialist, the SSCA, and the processor by telephone. The FDA shall notify the NMFS. The NMFS shall notify permitted harvesters to advise them to cease fishing in the affected area(s).

NOTE: Due to the resources necessary to meet the requirements of this Protocol, State Shellfish Control Authorities (SSCAs) may find it necessary to require industry to fund associated costs. These costs may include sample collection, screening, transportation, analysis, inspection, enforcement, and other related expenses.