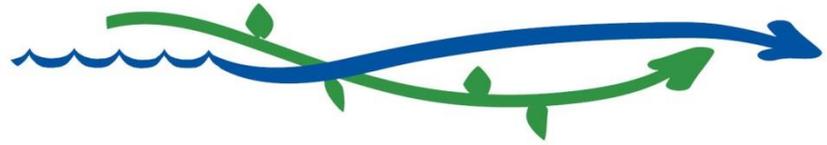




Environmental Dashboard

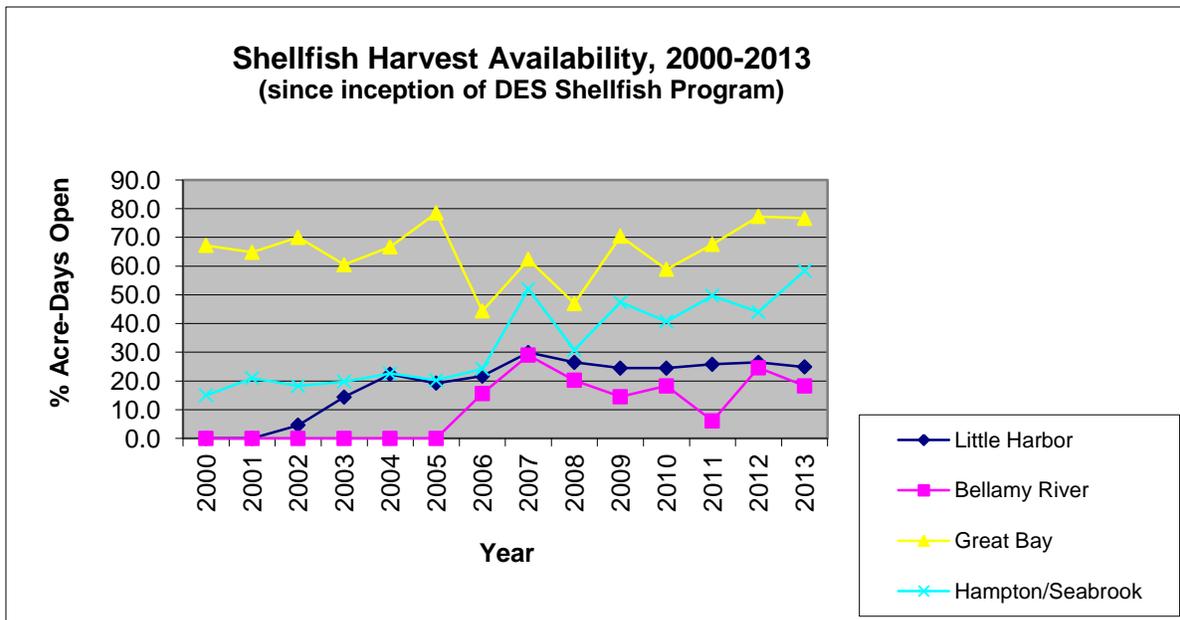


Trends in New Hampshire's Environment Coastal Waters: Shellfish Harvesting

The health of shellfish beds is an indicator of the overall water quality of our coastal waters. The availability of both commercial and recreational shellfish harvesting opportunities helps support a vibrant economy along the coast. The percentage of acre-days available for harvesting is representative of the impact of pollution in these coastal waters. Recreational and commercial shellfish harvest areas are sometimes closed because filter-feeding shellfish such as clams, oysters, and mussels are chronically or intermittently exposed to pollution.

Current Conditions

In 2013, the percentages of acre-days available for harvesting shellfish in the following areas were: Little Harbor, 25%; Great Bay, 77%; Hampton/Seabrook Harbor, 58%; and Bellamy River, 18%.



DATA SOURCE: NHDES Shellfish Program, March 2014

Explanation of Indicator and Trend

Although recreational harvesting has declined since the late 1980s, the commercial oyster industry is expanding, having grown from two farms in 2010 to 12 farms in 2014, with total harvest projections by 2015 to be 2.55 to 3.83 million oysters per year. This results in an annual wholesale commercial value of \$1.7 million to \$2.5 million. DES calculates an *acre-day* by comparing the number of days an area *could be open* for harvest to the number of days it is *actually open* for harvest. Temporary harvest closures are common in many shellfish growing areas following rainfall events, when runoff from impervious surfaces, such as pavement and rooftops, carries bacteria from pet and/or wildlife feces to the shellfish areas. Other sources of the bacteria may include waste discharges from boats, failing septic systems or pipe discharges of raw sewage.

More frequent heavy rainfall events in recent years have curtailed harvesting opportunities in areas such as Great Bay, although this area is still open more frequently than other harvest areas in the state. Little Harbor is kept closed for much of the year because of its proximity to large municipal wastewater treatment facilities, its small size, and the relatively large number of recreational boats that are kept in nearby marinas and mooring fields. Limited seasonal openings in late fall, winter, and early spring are occasionally shortened by rainfall closures. Hampton/Seabrook Harbor and Little Harbor have both seen an increase in harvesting opportunities. Unfortunately the Bellamy River has seen frequent closures in recent years due to bacterial contamination from sources that are being studied.

How Does DES Address This?

Since the inception of the Shellfish Program at DES in 1999, a great deal of effort has been directed toward identifying pollution sources and reopening more beds for commercial and recreational harvest. Active monitoring and management has resulted in increased harvesting opportunities in Hampton/Seabrook Harbor and Little Harbor. DES is conducting shoreline surveys in the Bellamy River and other areas to identify and eliminate the sources of bacteria. The DES Watershed Assistance Section works closely with municipalities and other organizations to track down specific sources of bacterial pollution and to identify funding opportunities to assist in eliminating existing problems and/or preventing future contamination. DES also maintains a boat sewage pumpout service that provides an inexpensive and convenient means to properly dispose of boat sewage.

For More Information, Including What You Can Do to Help

NH Coastal Atlas

<http://xml2.des.state.nh.us/CoastalAtlas/Atlas.html>

NH NHDES Shellfish Program

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/shellfish/index.htm>

Great Bay Estuary <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/coastal/great-bay-estuary.htm>

NH Coastal Program <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/coastal/index.htm>

Nonpoint Pollution Control Program

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/coastal/nonpoint/index.htm>

NH Clean Vessel Act Program

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/cva/index.htm>

Pet Waste Campaign: Scoop the Poop

http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/coastal/scoop_the_poop.htm

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