



## **DEC News Release**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **KACHEMAK BAY EAST CLOSED TO MUSSEL HARVEST**

**Closure due to paralytic shellfish poison**

**August 5, 2004** – Today, the Department of Environmental Conservation closed a commercial shellfish harvest area in Kachemak Bay, known as “Kachemak Bay East,” to commercial mussel harvesting due to high levels of paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) found in a sample from the area.

According to Mike Ostasz, DEC’s shellfish program manager, individuals are advised not to harvest or eat mussels from this area because of the unacceptable level of PSP. A mussel sample taken from the Kachemak Bay East area revealed a level of 255 micrograms of toxin per 100 grams of tissue. The national public health standard for PSP is 80 micrograms per 100 grams of tissue. Although this area normally has low levels of PSP, toxicity increases have occurred in mid August in the past.

Officials designated the area as east and south of a line in Kachemak Bay starting at the mouth of Martin River, extending to the northwest tip of Chugachik, Island and then southwest to Barabara Point. The area is closed to the commercial harvest and sale of mussels, but not other shellfish. The only allowable commercial harvest and sale of mussels will be from companies that submit mussel samples for PSP lot sampling analysis, and hold product pending satisfactory lab analysis. Presently, there is no accurate home test to determine the presence of PSP outside the laboratory.

PSP comes from algae, a food source for filter feeding shellfish such as clams, oysters and mussels. Toxin from the algae is stored in shellfish tissue. The toxin can be present even when there is no visible coloration, or “red tides” in the ocean water.

Ostasz said DEC is keeping the area closed for mussels and requiring at least three samples over a fourteen-day period before it considers reopening the area. All samples must show PSP levels below the 80 micrograms per 100 gram standard before the area is reopened. During this time, other shellfish species will also be carefully monitored. “Mussels are early warning indicators of the presence of PSP, so we will want to monitor other shellfish species during this time as well,” he said.

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