

Department of  
Environmental Conservation



Commissioner Ernesta Ballard

State of Alaska  
Departments of  
Environmental Conservation  
and  
Health & Social Services



Commissioner Joel Gilbertson

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### **Update on *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Outbreak Associated with Alaska Oysters**

**Juneau, Alaska** ---Until commercial shellfish samples test negative for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, the Departments of Environmental Conservation and Health and Social Services (DHSS) will provide ongoing, updated information to the public regarding growing areas associated with the outbreak of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* gastroenteritis.

*Vibrio parahaemolyticus* is a bacterium that naturally inhabits coastal waters in North America. Symptoms include watery diarrhea often with abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever, and chills that occur within 30 hours of ingestion.

Currently, DEC is working with growers on sampling water and oysters from shellfish growing areas throughout Alaska. To date, three oyster farms (two in Prince William Sound and one in southeast) have been identified with positive oyster samples linked to human cases of the disease outbreak. These three growing areas have been closed pending further laboratory analysis. They will remain closed until two consecutive representative samples of oysters collected a minimum of four days apart show an absence of pathogenic *V. parahaemolyticus*.

If five or more confirmed pathogenic *V. parahaemolyticus* colonies are found in both a sample and a replicate sample of oysters from a growing area, that growing area will be closed pending further analysis. In addition, if ill persons associated with this outbreak are identified as having eaten oysters from growing areas with laboratory confirmed pathogenic *V. parahaemolyticus*, those growing areas will also be closed pending further analysis. Growing areas are being asked to record water temperatures and to submit monthly reports to DEC.

So far, water and oyster samples submitted from Kachemak Bay East have been negative for *V. parahaemolyticus*; however, Kachemak Bay East has been holding their product since August 6 due to a paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) closure. Additional announcements will be made if more closures are necessary.

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Contact for Kachemak Bay Shellfish Growers Cooperative: George Overpeck, General Manager, at (907) 299-1932.

For more information on *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, visit [www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/](http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/)