

Larry Hartig  
Commissioner

P.O. Box 111800  
Juneau, AK 99011-1800

www.dec.alaska.gov



Lynda Giguere  
Information Officer

907.465.5009  
cell: 907.321.5491

lynda.giguere@alaska.gov

## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 3, 2007

Contact: George Scanlon, Division of Environmental Health, (907) 269-7638

### **DEC Warns of "Red Tide" Around the State**

Recent reports of "red tide" sightings from waters and beaches around Juneau, Kachemak Bay, and Kodiak have prompted the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to warn all shellfish harvesters to eat shellfish only from beaches that DEC has classified as safe. The risks of Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) from clams and mussels are elevated during a "red tide."

Red tides generally result from rapid increases in algae populations due to favorable temperatures or excess nutrients in the water. The algae, a food source for filter-feeding shellfish like clams and mussels, can cause PSP. Most shellfish only store the toxins for up to six weeks after a red tide passes, but butter clams are known to store the toxins for up to two years. In general, the toxins are not destroyed by heat and there is no known antidote.

PSP occurs widely in Alaska and strikes people nearly every year. PSP symptoms may appear in less than an hour after ingestion. Initial symptoms are a tingling or numbness in the lips and tongue, often followed by tingling and numbness in the fingertips and toes. These symptoms may progress to loss of muscle coordination, dizziness, weakness, drowsiness and incoherence. Vomiting should be induced at the first sign of symptoms, and medical attention should be sought immediately.

*The DEC warning does not apply to commercially-grown and harvested clams, mussels, crab, shrimp or other shellfish available in grocery stores and restaurants. These shellfish are tested regularly before marketing. Buying shellfish from retail outlets is safest, since supplies come from tested beaches.*

**DEC classified safe beaches include:** Halibut Cove Lagoon, Jakolof Bay, Kasitsna Bay (McDonald Spit), Tutka Bay, Chugachik Island, Sadie Cove, Polly Creek and Crescent River, all located in the Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay area.