

Shellfish Water Quality

The shellfish-monitoring program provides the database that is used in conducting a comprehensive evaluation of each shellfish growing area. Evaluations of growing areas, which meet National Shellfish Sanitation Program requirements, are conducted annually. Routine bacteriological monitoring and subsequent laboratory analyses of water quality from approximately 465 strategically located sample sites are conducted monthly. South Carolina currently has 25 management areas comprising approximately 578,000 surface acres of estuarine and coastal riverine habitat suitable for the cultivation and harvest of molluscan shellfish. These management areas are assigned water quality classifications for the primary purpose of public health protection. All standards, monitoring methodology, and laboratory analyses comply with guidance set forth in the National Shellfish Sanitation Program Model Ordinance. The Department uses combinations of the following harvesting classifications for shellfish area management:

Approved - Areas that are normally open for the direct marketing of shellfish for human consumption. Approved areas must not exceed an established water quality standard.

Conditionally Approved - Areas that meet criteria for an Approved classification except under predictable conditions. Closure criteria and subsequent re-opening procedures are described in an area-specific management plan.

Restricted - Areas exceeding Approved area water quality standards and normally closed for direct harvesting activities but where harvesting may be allowed by special permit.

Prohibited - Areas that are administratively closed for the harvesting of shellfish for any purposes related to human consumption. These closures are established adjacent to permitted wastewater discharges, marina facilities, or areas containing multiple point sources of pollution. The Prohibited classification is not based upon violation of a bacteriological standard.

For background information and the most current evaluation, please visit <http://www.scdhec.gov/FoodSafety/ShellfishMonitoring>