



TOWN OF CUMBERLAND, MAINE

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Dear Cumberland Resident:

As you may be aware, the shellfish areas managed by the Town of Cumberland were closed for the 2009 season. This action was necessary after water quality tests administered by the Department of Marine Resources revealed elevated levels of fecal coliform.

While we are happy to report that ongoing testing has demonstrated some overall improvement, at this time the flats remain closed to shellfish harvesting. We will continue to work cooperatively with the State, and are collaborating on ideas that will enable us to open at least a portion of the flats as soon as we can do so safely.

Citizens of Cumberland, and its watershed, are encouraged to refrain from using artificial fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and fungicides on their lawns as this is likely contributing to the destruction of the shellfish beds on our coastline. Though this outbreak's cause has not been specifically identified, we know that nutrient loading and runoff exacerbate planktonic blooms such as the red tide that occurred this past summer. Also, many of the fungicides and herbicides sold for lawn care and home use can kill crustaceans and arthropods, immediately impacting commercial and recreational fishing and shellfish harvesting. Please talk to the experts at your local nursery or natural lawn care service for alternative and organic fertilizer recommendations. Citizens should also consider supporting town efforts to eliminate out dated and faulty septic systems, and encourage public sewer systems and their modern upgrade when applicable. Sewer upgrades are expensive, but this is the only way to assure that a healthy Cumberland coastline will exist for the many uses it supports.

Town and state officials are expected to conduct shoreline surveys this spring, including field inspections of coastal properties and the collection of additional effluent samples (including pollution source tracing samples of streams, pipes, etc.) to determine their impact on the shellfish growing area. We hope that people will support a better Cumberland by their individual actions and by supporting community efforts at cleanup.

We will have more targeted information on point and/or non-point pollution sources affecting Cumberland's coast after this survey is completed. You are encouraged to check our web site (www.cumberlandmaine.com) for more information, as we will post the surveys and its findings, as well as the Shellfish Conservation Commission minutes and updates on the site.

Sincerely,

Michael Brown
Shellfish Conservation Commission Chairman