



QUONOCHONTAUG CENTRAL BEACH FIRE DISTRICT

July 31, 2019

The Salt Ponds Coalition provided the following update on July 30th, 2019 with information on how to find their data and sources for more information.

The Salt Ponds Coalition (<http://www.saltpondscoalition.org/>) has been working with URI Watershed Watch (URI WW) for several decades to monitor the salt ponds in order to better understand the current status and to track trends in order to inform decision makers and help communities make good choices for restoring and preserving the ponds. The data we gather are meant to help agencies, but are not in themselves used in a regulatory way. In other words, the tests we run are not used to close areas to shellfishing or swimming, but help to alert state agencies so they can further investigate.

The bacteria data generated through the Salt Ponds Watchers is posted online as soon after the water collection as URI WW can and is available at <https://web.uri.edu/watershedwatch/> (direct link is <https://web.uri.edu/watershedwatch/files/SPC-2019-Bacteria.pdf>). This data is public and accessible at any time. This data is a snapshot in both time and space. SPC tests in locations that we believe give us an accurate representation of what is happening across the entire pond. We collect bacterial data once per month during the summer - many variables including weather such as heavy rain can affect our readings.

Human waste contains potentially harmful pathogens, such as bacteria and viruses. If bacterial levels are beyond state standards, waters are deemed unsafe for contact or shellfishing. Thus, making sure that your septic system is properly functioning is not only critical for pond health, but for human health as well. Additionally, pet waste contains high levels of bacteria which pollute pond waters. Cleaning up after our pets before their waste can wash into

our ponds is an important step pond-neighbors can take to be stewards of the ponds.

If you have concerns about eating shellfish that you harvested call the RIDEM Shellfish Closures hotline for the latest information: 401-222-2900 or look for information on their website <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/water/shellfish/shellfish-closure-maps.php>. For the RI DOH's suggestions for swimming in coastal waters, follow this link: <http://www.health.ri.gov/beaches/index.php>.