DEC *N e w s   R e l e a s e*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kachemak Bay East Closed to Oyster & Clam Harvest Due to Paralytic Shellfish Poison

August 6, 2004--A commercial shellfish harvesting area in Kachemak Bay, known as "Kachemak Bay East" was closed today to **all commercial oyster and clam harvesting** by the Department of Environmental Conservation because of unacceptable levels of paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) found in samples from the area.

"Individuals are advised not to harvest from this area because of the unacceptable level of PSP," said Mike Ostasz, DEC shellfish program manager.

Officials designated the area as east and south of a line in Kachemak Bay starting at the mouth of Martin River, extending to the northwest tip of Chugachik Island and then southwest to Barabara Point. The area is closed to the commercial harvest and sale of all shellfish.

PSP comes from algae, a food source for filter feeding shellfish such as clams, oysters and mussels. Toxin from the algae is stored in shellfish tissue. The toxin can be present even when there is no visible coloration, or so-called red tides in the ocean water. Presently, there is no accurate home test to determine the presence of PSP outside the laboratory.

Two oyster samples taken from the Kachemak Bay East area revealed levels of 99 and 170 micrograms of toxin per 100 grams of tissue. The national public health standard for PSP is 80 micrograms per 100 grams of tissue. Although this area normally has low levels of PSP, increases in toxicity have previously occurred in mid August.

DEC is keeping the area closed for all shellfish harvest and requiring at least three samples per species over a fourteen-day period before it will consider reopening the area. All samples must show PSP levels below the 80 micrograms per 100 grams standard

before the area is reopened.

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