

## **Requirements for Wild Shellfish Harvest**

Dear Wild Shellfish Harvester,

The attached General Circular contains important information on food safety requirements for fishers harvesting bivalve shellfish that are intended to be sold for human consumption.

The requirements explained in the General Circular aim to provide appropriate food safety protection for shellfish consumers while minimising the cost to industry. The approach of end product testing for remote pipi harvest beaches is significantly cheaper to implement than the full ASQAP standard.

Please consider the information and if you have any concerns provide written comments to the NSW Food Authority by 15 June 2012.

There is more information on the national food safety standard for bivalve shellfish harvest you should refer to the ASQAP manual: <http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa/foodsafety/sasqap>

Yours sincerely

Polly Bennett  
Chief Executive Officer  
23 May 2012

## GENERAL CIRCULAR

This general circular contains important information from the NSW Food Authority for Wild Shellfish Harvesters

Please take the time to read this information.

If you have any queries, please contact  
NSW Food Authority Consumer & Industry Helpline on 1300 552 406

## General Circular 06/2012

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**To:** All Wild Harvest licensees harvesting bivalve shellfish intended for sale for human consumption.

**Subject:** Amended procedure for the harvest of wild bivalve shellfish from:

1. Open ocean beaches, and
2. Estuarine zones classified for shellfish cultivation.

### Action required

- Wild harvesters are required to test shell product monthly for *E.coli* when harvesting from beaches.
- Wild shellfish harvested from open beaches must be harvested under a biotoxin management plan approved by the NSW Food Authority (the Authority).
- Wild shellfish must only be harvested from designated shellfish harvest areas in accordance with harvest area management plans.
- Wild harvesters operating in estuaries (cockle collection) are required to become members of local shellfish programs and pay the associated local levy **or** they must classify their harvest areas in accordance with the Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Manual.

These requirements will take effect from 1 August 2012.

### Background

The NSW commercial wild shellfish harvest fishery is captured under Standard 4.2.1 of the Food Standards Code. This standard requires harvest of all bivalve shellfish to be undertaken in areas classified in accordance with the Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program (ASQAP) Manual.

#### *Harvest of pipis from ocean beaches*

Currently the wild harvest industry operates on various beaches with approved biotoxin management programs where pipis are collected, however the system of beach classification is not compliant with ASQAP requirements. The Authority has acknowledged that the process of full classification would be costly due to the large geographical area under which this industry operates and current uncertainty around wild stocks. Accordingly, the Authority has developed an alternative, lower cost, risk management program for remote beaches.

The Authority recognises that the vast majority of pipi collection takes place on low risk remote ocean beaches. The Authority has reviewed the beaches utilised by pipi harvesters and developed management regimes to manage food safety risks on remote beaches without the need for full classification. A procedure outlining the process for adding new beaches to the 'approved' list is attached to this circular. Under this procedure wild shellfish harvesters may request the addition of new beaches where it is deemed there is little to no potential pollution impacts.

Beaches with limited development or sewage outfalls may be able to meet these criteria with the implementation of closed safety zones. Beaches that otherwise meet the criteria but are subject to impact by uncommon extreme events such as major flooding in a nearby river may be approved to operate under a harvest area management plan that will outline zone specific beach closure triggers.

As a result of this reduced classification process all wild shellfish harvesters will be required to:

- conduct monthly *E.coli* testing of shell product for each calendar month that harvest is undertaken from individual beaches, and
- maintain membership with a current biotoxin management program approved by the Authority.

*Harvest from areas other than ocean beaches (eg estuaries)*

Where harvest is undertaken in approved oyster or mussel harvest areas, licence holders will be required to become members of the relevant local shellfish program(s). These programs operate in accordance with the full requirements of the ASQAP and the NSW Shellfish Program undertaking intensive and routine sampling to maintain harvest area classification.

To create equity across industries all wild shellfish harvesters that are known to harvest from estuarine zones will be required to contribute to the local levy as set by each local shellfish program. These monies are collected by the Authority and dispersed in full to local shellfish programs. These funds are used by local shellfish programs to help fund the sampling needed to maintain classification.

All product collected within these zones must be collected in accordance with the harvest area management plan. Failure to comply will result in compliance action by the Authority.

Where shellfish product is to be collected from areas with moderate to high risks from potential pollution sources (as determined by the Authority), a full harvest area classification process in accordance with ASQAP must be undertaken prior to the commencement of harvest. This classification must be undertaken by suitably qualified independent consultants and paid for by industry.

**Comments**

If you have any queries regarding these new requirements please send them in writing to the Authority by 15 June 2012.

Contact	Phone	Fax
<b>NSW Shellfish Program</b> <a href="mailto:nswsp@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au">nswsp@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au</a> or <a href="#">PO</a> Box 6682 SILVERWATER NSW 1811	02 9741 8484	02 9741 4896

Polly Bennett  
Chief Executive Officer  
NSW Food Authority

23 May 2012

**Procedure for the assessment, approval and implementation of new low risk pipi harvest beaches.**

Process step	Process description	Responsibility	Timeframe per step
1. Identify harvest area	Identify areas that have the potential to become designated shellfish harvest areas. Send the list of potential areas to the Authority with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) maps clearly identifying the harvest area(s),</li> <li>b) the species to be harvested,</li> <li>c) fishing methods to be employed, and</li> <li>d) evidence that the applicant holds the appropriate fishing endorsement for the proposed activity.</li> </ul>	Industry	N/A
2. Desktop assessment to determine if full classification required	Google Earth will be used to undertake a basic desktop assessment. Feedback will be provided to the applicant on the potential to be assessed as a remote area.	The Authority	21 days
3. Confirmation of harvest area	Applicant confirms intention to utilise the harvest area and requests formal assessment.	Industry	120 days
4. Shoreline survey and detailed assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) An in field survey of the potential and actual pollution sources in and adjacent to the harvest area</li> <li>b) Assessment report on shoreline survey findings provided to the applicant and published on the Authority's website</li> <li>c) If low risk, create harvest area management plan</li> <li>d) Areas that are not assessed as low risk will require a sanitary survey to be undertaken by a suitably qualified independent consultant</li> </ul>	The Authority	120 days
5. Sample collection – routine samples	Routine samples are samples required by the biotoxin management plan and the monthly <i>E. coli</i> samples	Industry	As required
6. Implement Harvest Area Management Plan	Monitor management plan triggers, and do not harvest when triggers are breached.	Industry	As required
7. Monitor beach for changes	Notify Food Authority of changes to the surrounding area, such as new urban developments, camping areas or holiday parks.	Industry	As required