Virginia oysters come from many waters.

What the Little Wicomico closure means for buyers and for oysters harvested elsewhere in Virginia.



Oysters at Harper's Table in Suffolk.

Virginia oysters reach buyers in more than one way. Watermen harvest wild grounds, growers tend leased waters, and shucking houses pack oyster meats for markets and kitchens. In shell or shucked, every lot has a harvest place—and that place matters.

The Little Wicomico River on the Northern Neck became the focus of a Salmonella investigation this fall, when health officials identified raw oysters from that harvest area as the likely source of illness in one group of cases within a wider outbreak. The river closed to shellfish harvest October 9. Some oysters sampled from the company's cages tested positive for Salmonella. Samples taken October 26 from public harvest grounds in the same river tested negative, with newer public-ground results still pending. The entire river remains closed; reopening requires three consecutive rounds of negative product tests.

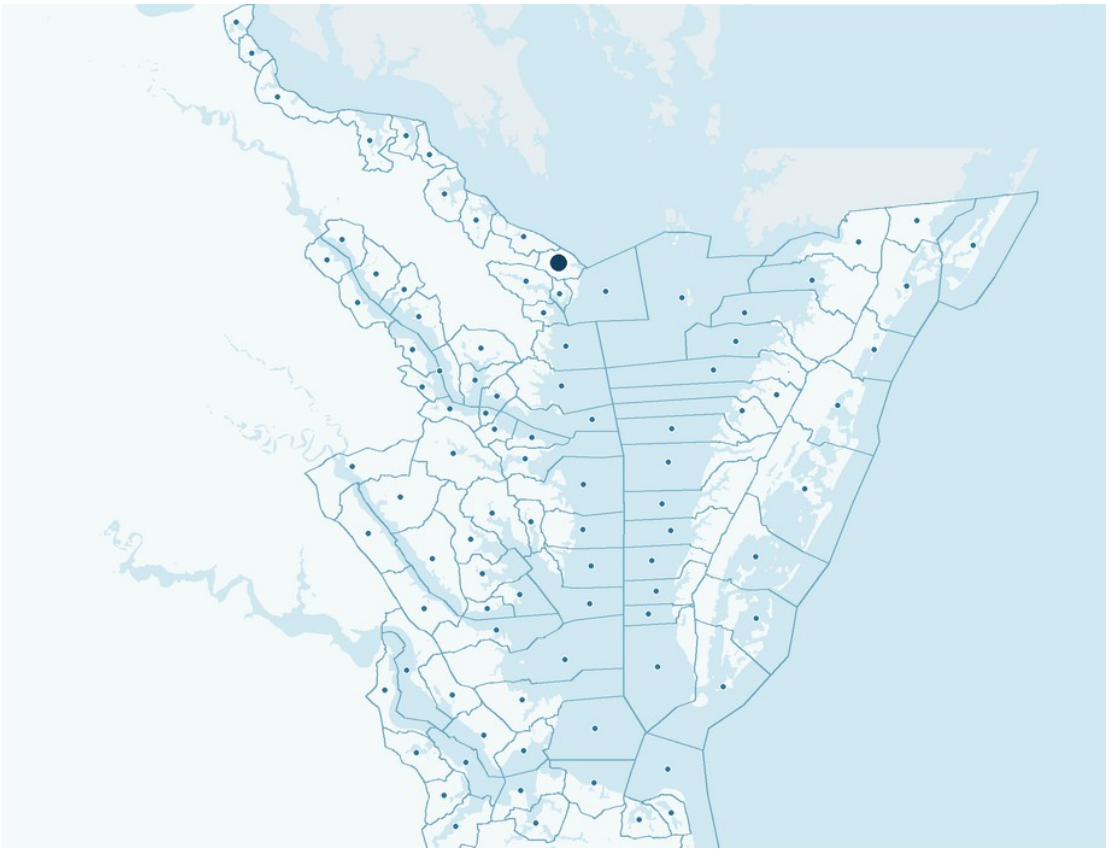
The recall covers shellstock harvested in the Little Wicomico September 18–October 8 by Little Wicomico Oyster Company (VA-1421-SP). **Recalled oysters should be returned or discarded, never served.** Shellfish from other open Virginia growing areas and other Virginia dealers are outside this recall and closure. More than 90 growing areas extend across the Bay, its rivers, and Atlantic estuaries.

90+ shellfish growing areas

4,651 shellfish leases statewide*

*VMRC's 2024–26 agency plan. Leases include oyster and clam grounds; this is not a count of active oyster farms.

One river among 90-plus growing areas



The larger dot marks Little Wicomico. Growing-area outlines are adapted from VDH; dots are area markers, not lease locations. This is not a live harvest-status map.

Virginia monitors growing waters individually. Shorelines are surveyed for possible pollution, water is sampled, and harvest status can change when conditions warrant it. Dealers and shucking houses are certified and inspected. Their records help trace affected lots if a problem is found.

How buyers can check the source

Shellstock tags show the harvest area and date. Every raw shucked-oyster container carries the certified processor's name, certification number, and required date information. Lot and dealer records connect that container to the growing area and harvest date. A retailer or restaurant can ask its dealer to confirm the source of a shucked lot, even when the harvest area is not printed on the container.

A note about eating them raw

Like chicken and eggs, oysters can carry Salmonella. Cooking reduces that risk; serving oysters raw does not. Anyone can become ill, but infants, adults 65 and older, and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to become seriously ill. FDA advises higher-risk people, including those who are pregnant, to avoid raw shellfish. Cooking oysters from an open, approved area reduces risk. Recalled oysters should never be served, even cooked.

A buyer can show a client the harvest area and date for shellstock, or confirm a shucked lot with the dealer. The Little Wicomico remains closed while other open Virginia waters continue to supply oysters.

CURRENT STATUS & SOURCES VDH outbreak update • live harvest map • VDH classification • VMRC lease count • NSSP labeling (Ch. X) • FDA NSSP • FDA risk guidance