



## news releases



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Contact:** Lawrence Hajna (609) 984-1795  
Bob Considine (609) 292-2994  
Steve Schapiro (NJDOT) (609) 530-4280**STATE-LOCAL PARTNERSHIP ELIMINATES SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF WASTEWATER POLLUTION TO MONMOUTH COUNTY'S SHARK RIVER**

**(17/P19) TRENTON** – Working in collaboration, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Protection, Monmouth County and Neptune City have tracked down and repaired a significant source of bacterial contamination that affected water quality and contributed to the closure of shellfish beds in the Shark River late last year.



Using dye tests and cameras provided by NJDOT, the partners were able to locate sewage leaking into a stormwater discharge pipe at West Sylvania Avenue in Neptune City. The source of the infiltration into the stormwater pipe was then traced to two leaking municipal sewer lines, which the city recently repaired.

"This has been a team effort in the truest sense of the term," said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "Our scientists worked very closely with NJDOT engineers, who provided extensive technical and resource support."

"We also had the strong support of Monmouth County, local officials and Senator Jennifer Beck to track down the source of this pollution, no easy task considering the size of the area that had to be investigated

and the complexity of piping networks in the area. Neptune City also stepped up and fixed the leaks promptly. I commend everyone who went the extra yard to protect the quality of water in the Shark River."

"NJDOT personnel have the experience and skills needed to investigate the vast network of underground water and sewer pipes that run beneath the roadways in New Jersey – whether they are State, county, or municipal roads," NJDOT Commissioner Richard T. Hammer said. "Neptune City approached the Department of Transportation last year regarding an issue with erosion on one of its roads. NJDOT led a coordinated inter-agency effort in which our engineers, through the use of Transportation Trust Funds, investigated the issue and in the process identified the source of long-term and persistent bacteria infiltration into the Shark River."

"It has been a real pleasure to work with the DEP, NJDOT, and Monmouth County on this project to preserve our natural resource," said Neptune Mayor Robert Brown. "This is proof how you can make great progress on such an important project when we all have the same goal."

In early November, the DEP's Bureau of Marine Water Quality Monitoring suspended any harvesting of clams from two stretches of the river totaling 266 acres – 122 acres in the northern portion of the river in Neptune City and 144 acres in the western portion of the river at Belmar – due to extremely elevated levels of bacteria, a strong indicator of sewage leaks.

Over the past several months, the DEP has coordinated a track-down effort that began with extremely high levels of bacteria being discharged from a pipe that carries stormwater into the river at Steiner and Boston roads.

Barely 12 miles in total length, the Shark River is comprised primarily of a large, U-shaped estuarine basin that is connected to the ocean by a relatively narrow inlet.

The DEP and its partners are currently launching a similar effort to track down the source of bacteria being discharged into the western portion of the basin. This situation may also be the result of an underground sewage pipe leak.

"We still have a lot more work ahead of us, but this is a great step toward identifying and tracking sources of bacteria that impact shellfish beds and can diminish the public's recreational enjoyment of the river," said Ray Bukowski, DEP's Assistant Commissioner for Compliance and Enforcement, who organized the track-down effort.

Prior to their closure, the shellfish beds were classified as restricted due to degrading water quality, and have not been harvested in years because they would need to be taken to a special plant for cleansing, a process known as depuration, before they could be shipped to market.