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Stony Brook gets algae bloom study funds

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By JOSEPH MALLIA joseph.mallia@newsday.com

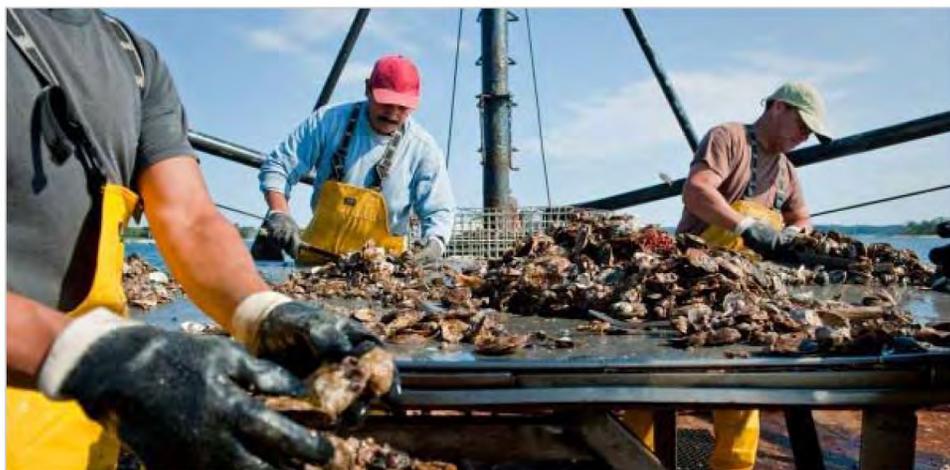


Photo credit: Steve Pfost | Crew of the fishing boat Waldron B. sort hundreds of fresh oysters pulled from the Long Island Sound in the waters off Oyster Bay and Bayville. (Oct. 5, 2011)

Long Island's clam, oyster and mussel harvesting industries got a boost this week with the first installment of a planned federal grant of almost \$600,000 to research early-warning systems for toxic algae blooms.

Eating shellfish tainted by the toxic blooms can lead to paralysis or death. The toxins have resulted in the closing of 11,400 acres of fertile shellfish beds off Long Island since 2006, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said.

"This work will enable consumers of New York shellfish to remain confident in the quality of the local seafood they enjoy and enable New York to safeguard a commercial industry generating \$19 million per year," NOAA said.

The first-year award of \$125,614 was given to scientists at Stony Brook University and partner

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institutions researching new methods of monitoring and predicting harmful blooms caused by Alexandrium and Dinophysis paralytic algae, NOAA said. The agency is expected to renew the grant for two more years, for a total of \$591,082.

"Eating shellfish tainted with toxins from these marine algae species can lead to paralytic shellfish poisoning and diarrhetic shellfish poisoning in humans," NOAA said. "The project will investigate advanced monitoring technologies and early-warning methods to help New York respond to a growing toxic algae bloom problem that is a threat to public health and jobs that depend upon harvesting and marketing of seafood."

The grants go to Stony Brook's School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences and research partners at the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and a citizens volunteer group, Phytoplankton Monitoring Network.

Part of NOAA's mission is to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources.

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