

## HEALTH & SCIENCE

# RED TIDE EASED THIS SPRING, STUDY FINDS

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Long Island did not see any shellfish bed closures due to red tide this spring for the first time in seven years — but the algae responsible have been found in a new location on the East End, according to researchers at Stony Brook University.

Cooler than average temperatures kept the algae from blooming large enough to cause closures, said Christopher Gobler, a professor at the university's School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences.

Red tide — which doesn't always make the water appear red — is caused by excessive numbers of the dinoflagellate *Alexandrium*, which produces a toxin that can accumulate in shellfish, making them hazardous to eat.

"There was red tide, but it wasn't at a level and intensity

and duration high enough to make the shellfish toxic enough to warrant a shellfish-bed closure," Gobler said.

Meteorological spring, which covers March, April and May, was .3 degrees cooler than average this year at the National Weather Service's measuring station in Islip, said Joey Picca, a meteorologist with the service in Upton.

"It was just consistently on the cool side," Picca said, adding that it wasn't a "huge anomaly."

Gobler said he found red tide algae in a new location this year: Moneybogue Bay in Westhampton.

"We just happened to sample it, and in doing so we found that it was another site that had high levels this spring," he said.

The algae flourish in areas with excessive nitrogen levels and low water circulation.

Gobler said his team is now measuring for brown tide — a

harmful algal bloom that is also toxic to shellfish and turns the water a murky brown.

Brown tide is also harmful to sea grass because it keeps light from reaching the underwater plants, Gobler said. Like red tide, brown tide appears in areas with high nitrogen levels.

In addition, the state Department of Environmental Conservation reported finding blue-green algae, also known as cyanobacteria, in widespread areas of Big Reed Pond in Montauk, Lake Agawam in Southampton and Marratooka Lake in Mattituck.

The bacteria, found in the Agawam and Marratooka lakes last year, can be dangerous to humans and animals, and the DEC recommends that people and pets stay out of water with blue-green algal blooms.

In 2012, a Jack Russell terrier died after drinking water from Georgica Pond in East Hampton that contained the bacteria.