



# NSW SHELLFISH PROGRAM UPDATE AND HARVEST & HOLD SCHEME

## NSW OYSTER INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

May 2026

# NSW SHELLFISH PROGRAM HISTORY

- Setup in response to oyster related illness outbreaks in the 1970s – 1990s.
- Significant reduction in number and magnitude of outbreaks since implementation early 2000s.
- Program meets accepted international practice – export market access.
- NSW oysters very rarely implicated in illness outbreaks.
- **Manages risk in real-time** – open/close harvest areas based on sample results and environmental conditions.



# NSW SHELLFISH PROGRAM



- Implements the Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program (based on international standards).
- Every shellfish harvest area is classified according to risk.
- Classification process:
  1. Shoreline survey to map potential pollution sources.
  2. Sampling program to collect data (2-3 years ~40 sample rounds)
  3. Prepare a comprehensive sanitary survey report.
  4. On-going this must be reviewed annually – annual review report for each harvest area.

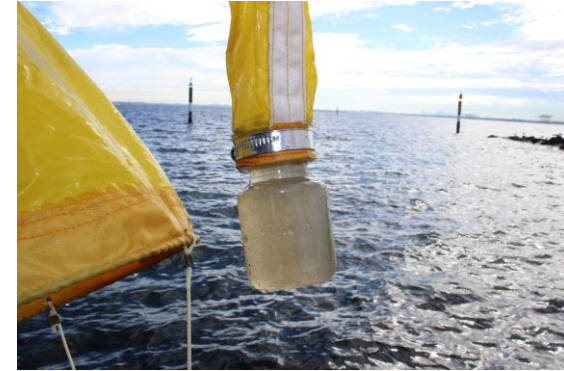




# LOCAL SHELLFISH PROGRAM SAMPLING

## Bacteriological

- Water - Faecal coliforms
- Shellfish – *E.coli*
- *Salinity and temperature with every sample*
- Adverse + opening samples – generally 10-20 sample rounds per year.



## Phytoplankton/Biotoxin

- Phytoplankton – Total phyto, plus harmful/nuisance species. Fortnightly when operating.
- Biotoxins – ASP, DSP, PSP, AZT, others. Monthly when operating.
- *Salinity and temperature with every sample.*



# ENVIRONMENTAL DATA – ON-GOING

## Heavy Metals/Chemicals

- Survey of commercially harvested shellfish – every estuary sampled.
- Once every three years (data back to 1999).

## Analytes Tested

- Aluminium
- Arsenic
- Cadmium
- Lead
- Mercury
- Selenium
- Copper
- Chromium
- Zinc
- Nickel
- Antimony (some years)
- PAH
- PCBs
- Organochlorine pesticides
- Organophosphate pesticides



# PRIMARY CLASSIFICATIONS

## APPROVED

Harvest and direct sale  
**<14cfu/100ml**

- No human/animal faecal matter present, that presents an actual/potential hazard
- No poisonous substance exceeds standards

## RESTRICTED

Does not meet approved criteria  
consistently, **depurate**  
prior to sale  
**<70cfu/100ml**

- Level of contaminants are low and shellfish can be made fit for human consumption by **deputation**

## PROHIBITED

No harvest at any  
time

- No comprehensive sanitary survey
- Unpredictable pollution sources
- Test results exceed food safety standards.

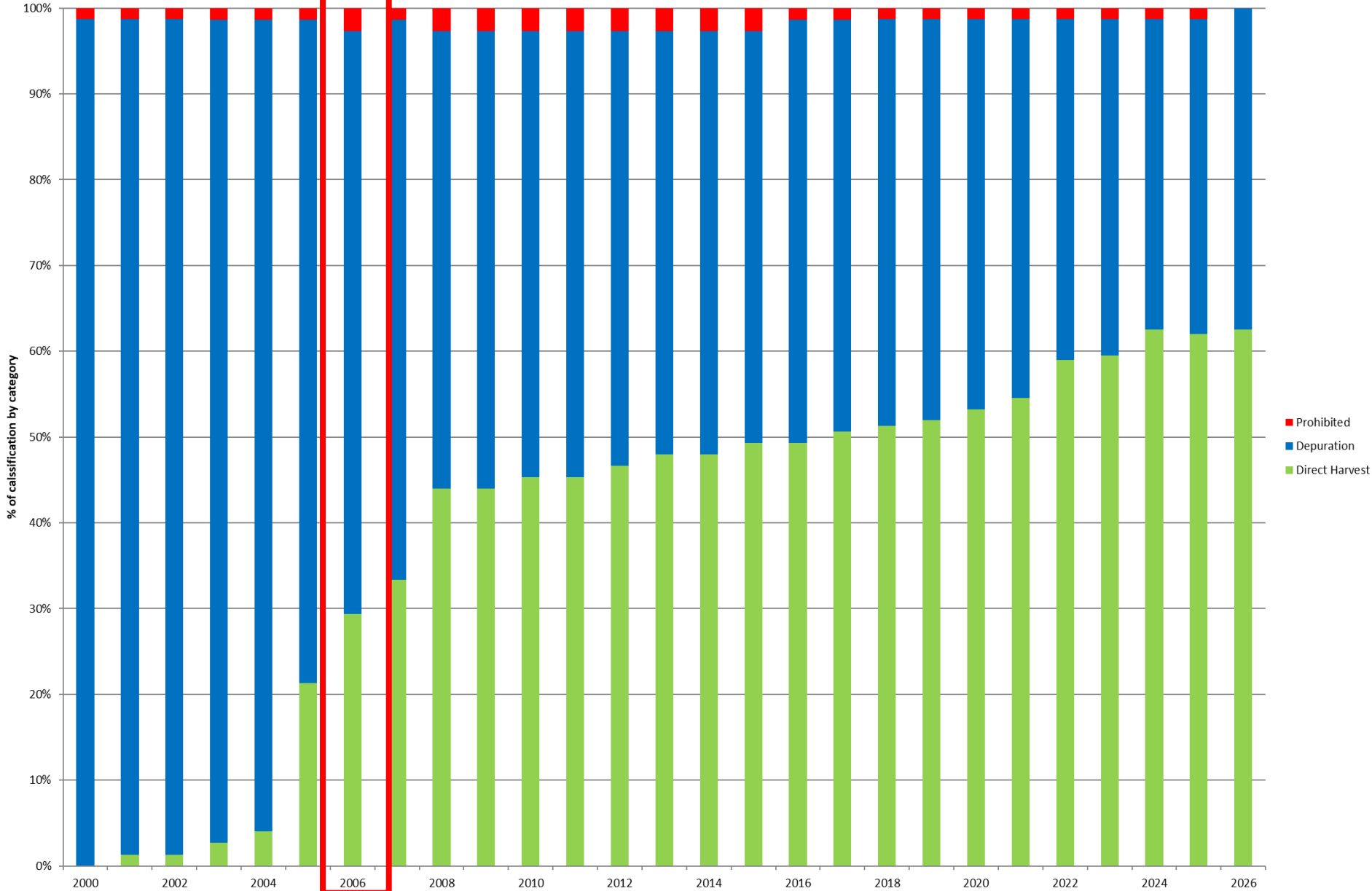
emergency



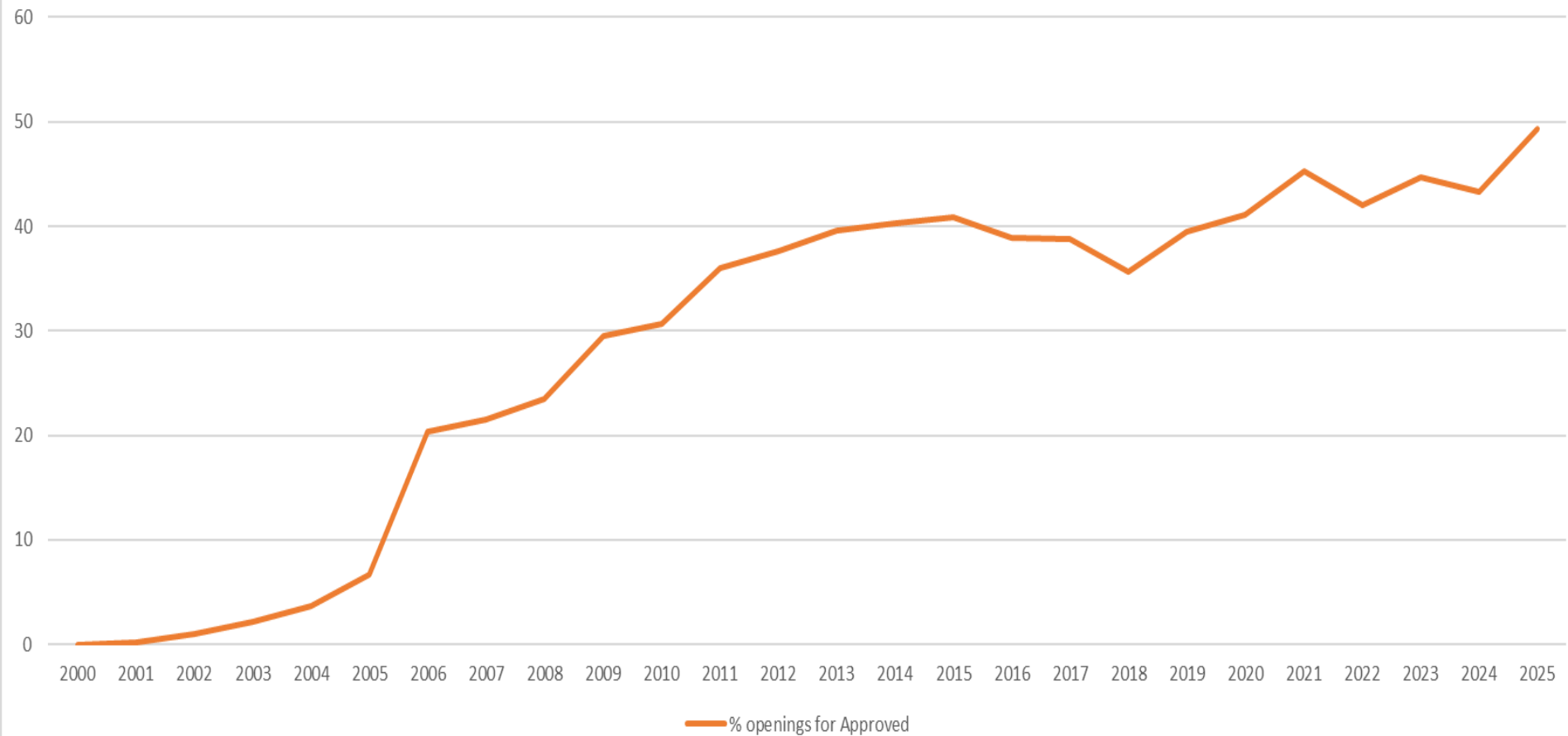
Food  
Authority

# CLASSIFICATION HISTORY

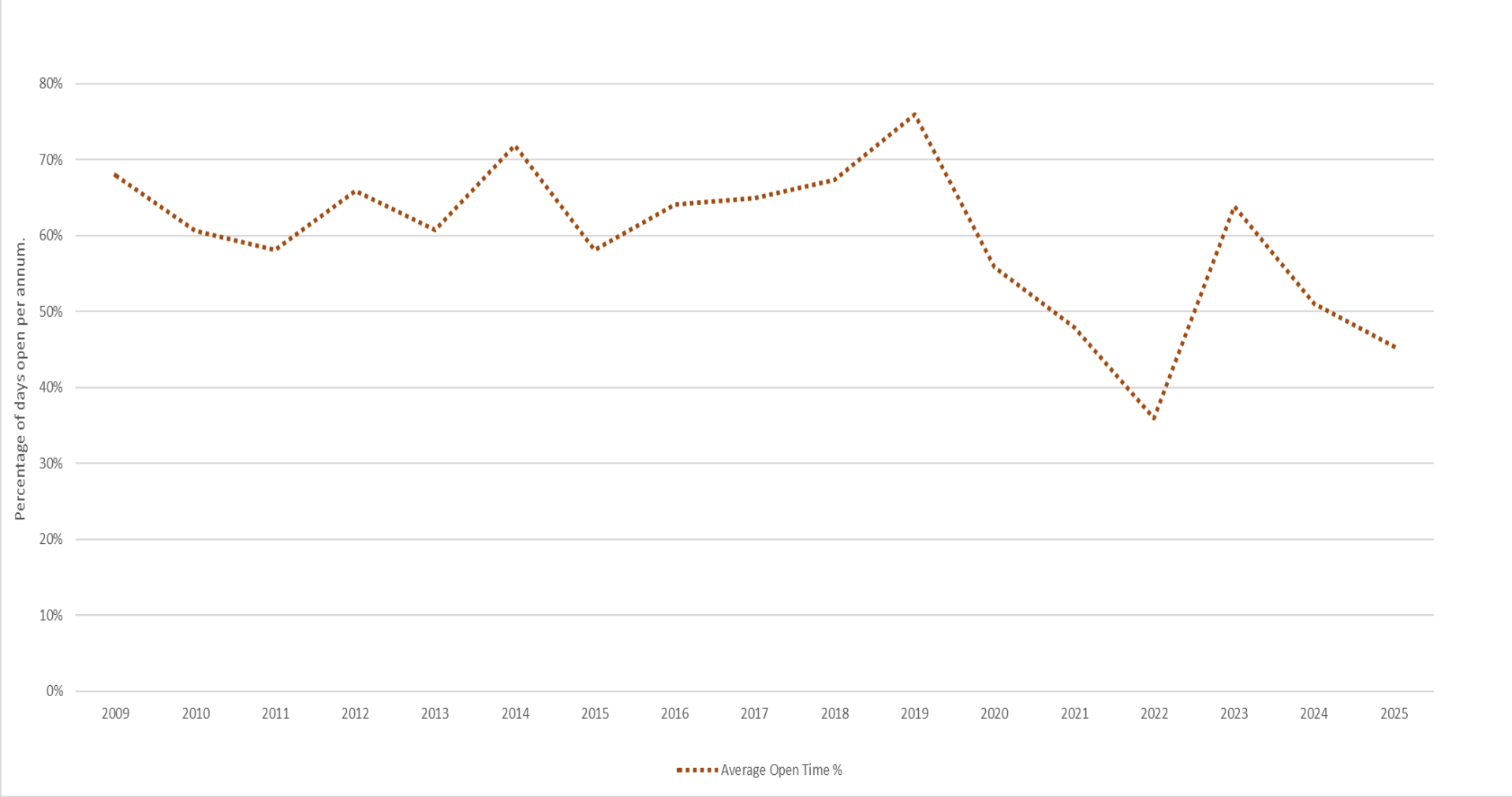
NSW Shellfish Program Harvest Area Classification History



## NSW Shellfish Program % Openings for Direct Harvest



### NSW Shellfish Program Annual Average Days Open (Calendar Year)



# HOW CAN WE IMPROVE HARVESTING OPPORTUNITIES

- Water Quality Improvements
- Refine Harvest Area Management Plans
- Utilise the Harvest and Hold Scheme



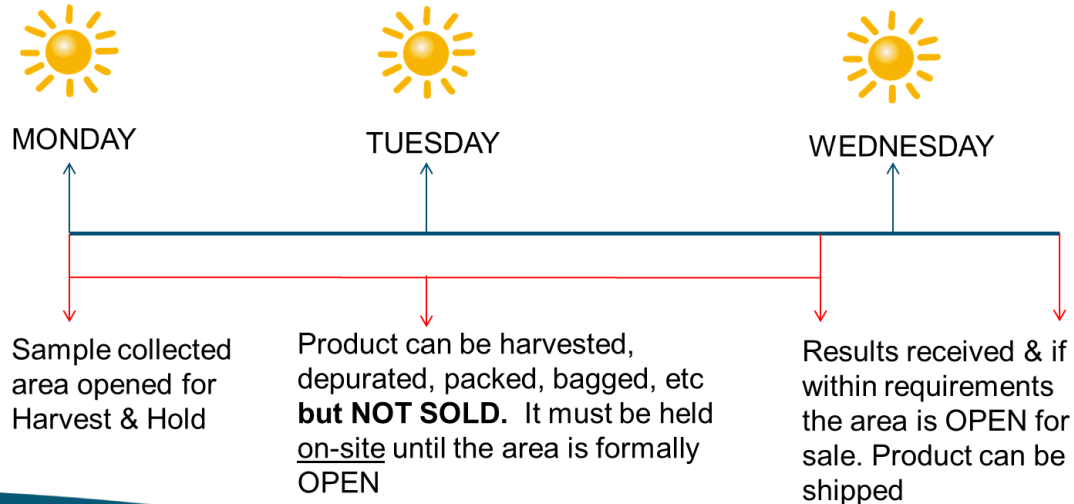
**NSW SHELLFISH  
PROGRAM**  
**HARVEST AND  
HOLD SCHEME**



# WHAT IS HARVEST & HOLD?

- The Harvest & Hold Scheme allows shellfish farmers to harvest product in the period between sample collection for an opening and reporting of results.
- Developed in response to a request from the NSW Shellfish Committee.
- Adopted in 2014 following extensive policy development.

Harvest & Hold Scheme is available on the NSW Food Authority website



# ELIGIBILITY FOR HARVEST & HOLD

## Local Program Level

- >90% compliance with Management Plan requirements.

## Individual Business Level

- Attend Harvest & Hold training workshop
- Complete & pass the Harvest & Hold assessment
- Apply for Harvest & Hold permission on your licence

**Participation in Harvest & Hold can only occur once all the above have been approved and your Food Authority licence has been updated.**

# WHEN CAN A HARVEST AREA BE OPEN FOR HARVEST AND HOLD?

The local program has met the required 90% compliance threshold at the last annual review.

Biotoxin management sampling is current (fortnightly phytoplankton/monthly biotoxin).

Water and shellfish samples have been collected and sent to the laboratory.

Salinity levels are above the management plan limit for an opening.

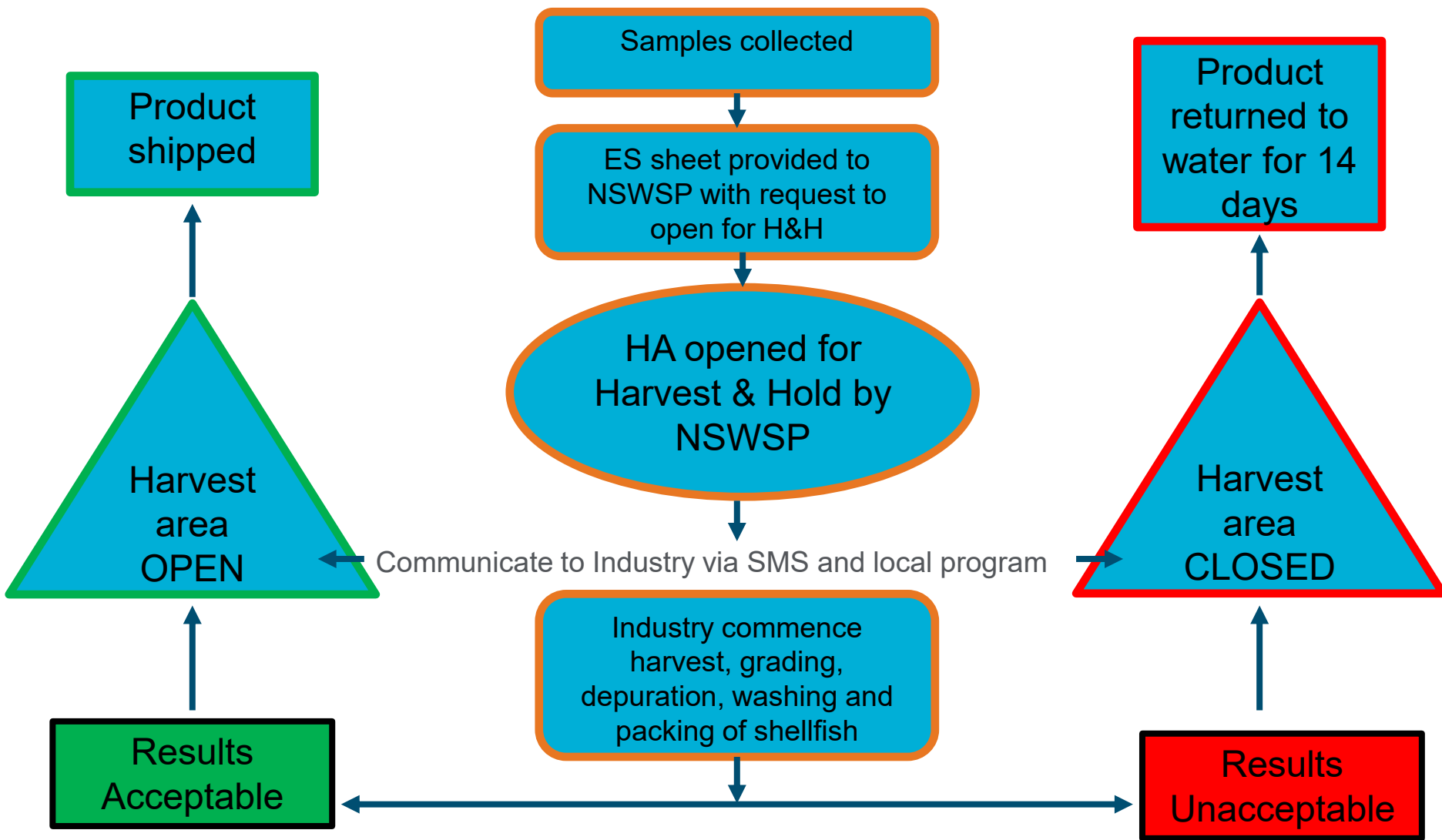
**Summary: Everything is in place to support an opening except the receipt of the opening sample results.**

# HARVEST & HOLD BENEFITS

- ✓ Increased harvest opportunities.
- ✓ Red tape reduction by minimising days closed.
- ✓ Window of opportunity between sample collection and result receipt.
- ✓ Help to align harvest opportunity with market demand.

**2017 Independent Economic Assessment - \$1.7 million benefit to industry.**

# HARVEST & HOLD FLOWCHART



# HARVEST AND HOLD COURSE

- Primarily delivered online (MS Teams)
- Face to face courses held for groups.
- Interested: Put your name on the Harvest and Hold Course waitlist by contacting the NSW Shellfish Program:

Email: [food.nswsp@dpird.nsw.gov.au](mailto:food.nswsp@dpird.nsw.gov.au)

Phone: 1300 552 406

Provide you name, email, and phone number. Ask to be put on the Harvest and Hold Training list.

# NSW SHELLFISH COMMITTEE

Committee appointed April 2025 – April 2028

Current Members:

- Prof Shauna Murray (Chair)
- Andrew Prowse
- Brandon Armstrong
- Steve Coxon
- Shane Buckley
- NSW Farmer Representative
- Meets 4 times a year (February, May, August, November).

<https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/shellfish/nsw-shellfish-committee>



# THANK YOU

## QUESTIONS?

[foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)



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