

National Mussel Watch Program

CELEBRATING
40 YEARS



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

NOAA's National Mussel Watch Program has been monitoring chemical contaminants and biological stressors in the nation's coastal waters for 40 years. The program relies on bivalves, such as mussels and oysters, to assess water quality. These organisms remain fixed in one location and filter large volumes of water, acting as natural monitors by accumulating contaminants in their tissues. This provides scientists with a record of local chemical contamination that reflects water conditions.

In 1986 NOAA established the program following the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) (33 USC 1442), which called on the Secretary of Commerce to implement a long-term, national monitoring initiative. Since its inception 1986, the program has grown and evolved.

A LOOK THROUGH THE YEARS

1986	NOAA Mussel Watch Program founded
1989	Response to Exxon Valdez oil spill
1992	Expanded to include sampling sites in Puerto Rico and Great Lakes
2001	Response to 9/11
2005	Response to Hurricane Katrina
2009	Expanded to include analysis of PFAS
2010	Response to Deepwater Horizon oil spill
2015	Expanded to include analysis of current use pesticides, pharmaceuticals and personal care products
2022	Expanded to integrate stakeholder selected sampling sites
2026	Mussel Watch Program celebrates 40 th anniversary

BY THE NUMBERS



The longest running continuous contaminant-monitoring program of its kind in the U.S.

1986 ————— 2026

691



Contaminants tested

425



Sites tested

947,482



Number of data points



203

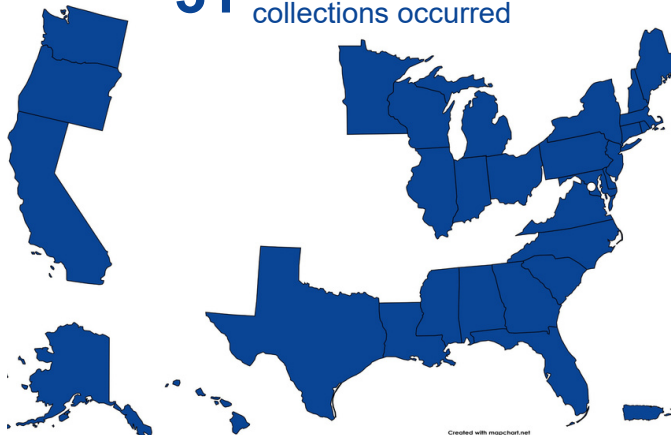
Number of publications

1826

Number of publications citations



31 States/territories where collections occurred



Assisting with Response Efforts

Data produced by the Mussel Watch Program has helped lead environmental responses to several catastrophes and disasters. This is because the program develops a baseline knowledge of coastal water quality that can be used to guide remediation efforts. The program has helped:



Understand acute impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to help guide remediation efforts (2010)



Monitor chemical contaminant levels following Hurricane Katrina (2005)



Quantify impacts of 9/11 on coastal water quality (2001)



Investigate long term recovery following the Exxon Valdez oil spill (1989)

Providing Health Guidance

The Mussel Watch Program has helped guide federal, regional, state, and municipal efforts towards restoring water quality and ecological health. The program has worked to:



Establish safe shellfish consumption guidelines with the FDA and EPA.



Support remediation decisions in several states.



Identify Superfund sites.



Assist tribal and indigenous groups to assess the safety of subsistence seafood.



Visit the [National Mussel Watch Program](#) for more information about the program and to [sign up](#) for the biannual newsletter.

