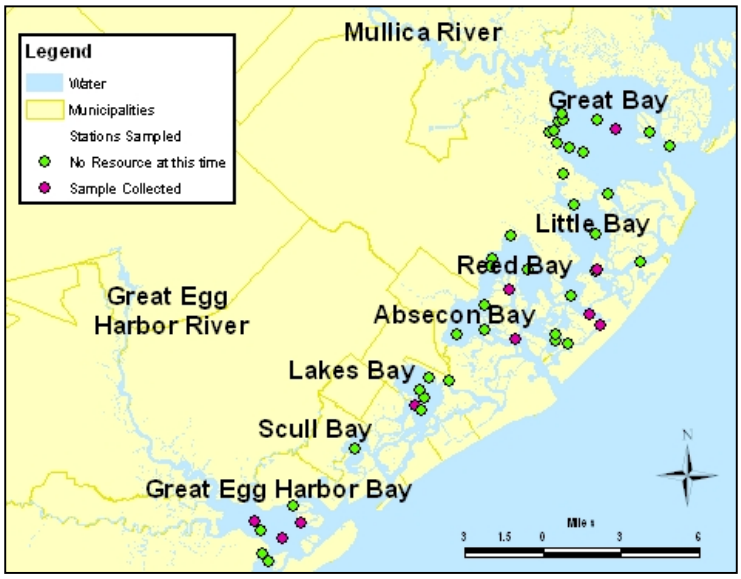
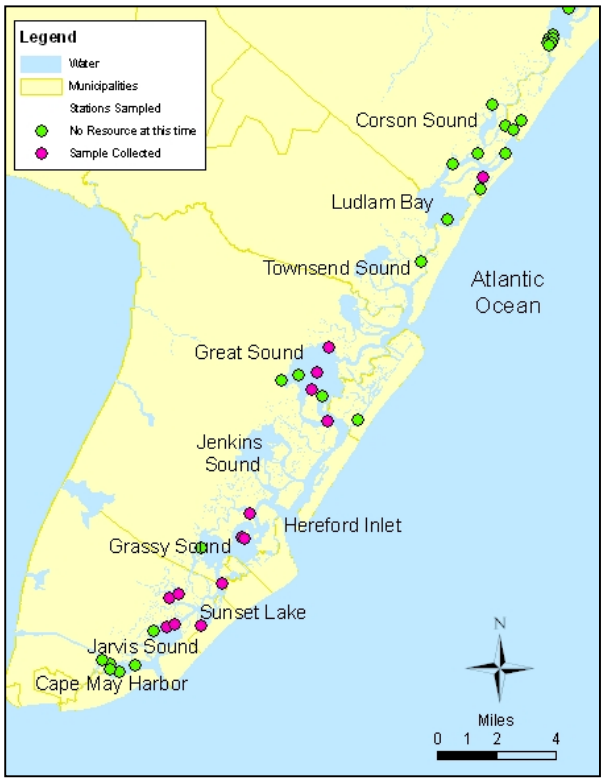
Toxic Pollutants in Shellfish Tissue

Shellfish are an important component in the economy of New Jersey. They also provide, over time, an excellent tool for monitoring coastal water quality. Monitoring toxic pollutants in shellfish can provide a long-term perspective on water quality. Shellfish filter large quantities of water and, in the process, accumulate pollutants to levels many times higher than are present in the water. This makes shellfish an excellent indicator for bioaccumulative, toxic pollutant levels in coastal waters. Regular testing of pollutants in shellfish began in Atlantic and Cape May Counties in 2005. In 2006, testing will be expanded to other coastal waters of the State. Pollutants measured include toxic metals (arsenic, cadmium, chromium, mercury, lead and nickel), pesticides and total polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's) in shellfish tissue. Results of this monitoring are compared to established federal standards and guidelines for safe consumption of shellfish. Comparisons to historical data will be made where possible to evaluate trends in pollutant levels in shellfish tissue. Data are made available on the Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring's web page at http://www.nj.gov/dep/wmm/bmw/EMPACT.htm.





Locations of 2005 shellfish toxics sampling in Atlantic County (above) and Cape May County (right).