

Fidalgo Bay

Anacortes, Skagit County, Washington

Fact Sheet

The Washington State Department of Health completed a health consultation that looked at contaminants in sediments, clams, crab, and bottom fish from Fidalgo Bay in Anacortes, Washington. The Washington State Department of Ecology has identified the bay for cleanup. The consultation's purpose was to see whether contaminants in the bay could potentially harm human health.

Background

Fidalgo Bay is a large, shallow tide flat that supports a variety of marine life and many species of birds. The bay is used for both recreational and industrial activities such as fishing/shellfishing, marinas, oil refining, boat building, and wood product manufacturing.

Some industries along the west shore of Fidalgo Bay have released contaminants in the past. Custom Plywood, Cap Sante Marine, a former Shell Oil tank farm, and Dakota Creek Industries are all in legal agreements (called Agreed Orders) with Ecology to conduct studies that will be used to guide the cleanup process. The former Scott Paper Mill property site is under a legal agreement with Ecology (called a Consent Decree) to clean up and restore this area of the bay.

Fidalgo Bay is also an important historic harvest area for Native American tribes and nations. However, the harvest has been reduced in recent years because of pollution.

What is known about contamination at this site?

Contaminants in the bay collect in sediments, fish, and shellfish. People can be exposed to contaminants in the sediment by touching, breathing, or accidentally eating soil. People are exposed to contaminants in fish and shellfish by eating them.

Sediment and tissue samples (clams, crabs, and fish) were collected from Fidalgo Bay between August and October 2007. Carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (cPAHs) were determined to be the contaminant of concern for sediments. Arsenic, cadmium, chromium, mercury, and dioxin are the contaminants of concern for the tissue samples.

Many factors determine whether human health will be harmed by contaminants: the type of contaminant, length of exposure, how much a person is exposed to, and how a person is exposed (breathing in, eating, or skin contact).

Conclusions from the health report:

- Touching, breathing, or accidentally eating sediments from Fidalgo Bay is not expected to harm the health of adults or children.
- Eating bottom fish or shellfish from Fidalgo Bay is not expected to harm the health of the general population.
- Eating bottom fish or shellfish from Fidalgo Bay at a tribal consumption rate could harm people's health.

Ecology's cleanup of Fidalgo Bay will help reduce any potential risk to human health. The Department of Health recommends that Ecology continue with this process and make sure the cleanup sites are monitored.

To view the health consultation: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/oehas/consults.htm>

Fish and shellfish advisories

Fidalgo Bay is included in the Puget Sound Recreational Marine Area 7. The following advisories apply to this area:

Fish Consumption Advice for Fidalgo Bay

Resident Chinook salmon (blackmouth): No more than 2 meals per month

Rockfish: No more than 1 meal per week

Chinook salmon*: 1 meal per week.

Chum, sockeye, pink, and coho salmon*: 2-3 meals per week.

Flatfish: 2-3 meals per week

* High-end consumers and tribal consumers who eat more than 2 meals per week should follow fish preparation recommendations.

Puget Sound Crab Advisory

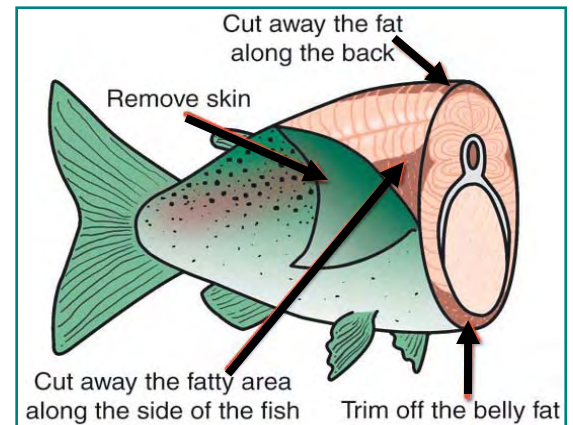
Eat Dungeness and red rock crab from non-urban areas. **Do not eat the crab butter.** If you boil crab in water do not consume broth.

Fish preparation recommendations

PCBs and other contaminants collect in the fat of fish. Simple steps can help cut the amount of some contaminants in cooked fish by up to 50 percent.

- When cleaning fish, remove the skin, fat, and internal organs before cooking
- Grill, bake, or broil fish so that fat drips off while cooking
- Do not use fat drippings for sauces or gravies

Mercury is stored in the fillet of the fish and is not reduced by preparing fish this way



For more information:

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