



News Release

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Pollution closes shellfish harvest in one area; 11 other areas threatened

High bacteria levels force closure at popular razor clam beach in Grays Harbor County

OLYMPIA — High levels of fecal bacteria found in the water near Ocean Shores in Grays Harbor County will lead to a year-round shellfish harvest closure for a small part of the coast. The state Department of Health also listed 11 of Washington’s 101 commercial shellfish growing areas as “threatened” with closure because of pollution.

The list is a result of the Department of Health’s annual evaluation of the state’s commercial shellfish growing areas. In threatened areas, the water quality meets the required standards but testing shows it’s nearing the cut-off limit.

“If water quality in the threatened shellfish areas gets worse we’ll have to restrict or close harvesting there,” said Bob Woolrich, Growing Area Section Manager. “Having an area listed as ‘threatened’ is a signal to communities to identify and correct pollution problems.”

Threatened shellfish harvest areas include: **Grays Harbor County** – Grays Harbor, Pacific Coast; **Kitsap County** – Port Orchard Passage; **Mason County** – Hood Canal 6 (Alderbrook area), Pickering Passage (McLane Cove); **Pacific County** – Bay Center, Naselle River; **Pierce County** – Burley Lagoon; **Thurston County** – Henderson Inlet, Nisqually Reach; **Whatcom County** – Portage Bay.

In most cases, only part of the shellfish growing area is listed as threatened. In several areas pollution investigations and efforts to fix the problems are underway; in others, investigations will begin soon. [Last year, harvest was limited in one area](#) and nine areas were listed as “threatened” due to pollution.

“This early warning helps protect the valuable shellfish resources in Washington state,” said Marc Daily, interim executive director of the Puget Sound Partnership. “Our partners have been

successful in taking this information and improving water quality by finding and fixing sources of fecal bacteria from on-site septic systems and farms. We expect that to continue. Thanks to the combined efforts of the Department of Health, local governments, farmers, conservation districts, private landowners and so many others, Puget Sound is seeing real, measureable improvement.”

The Partnership is the state agency responsible for ensuring public dollars spent on Puget Sound recovery are used effectively. Restoring the health of shellfish beds is one of the top priorities outlined in the Puget Sound Action Agenda – the science-based plan to restore Puget Sound.

The Department of Health’s Office of Shellfish and Water Protection’s goal is to make sure that shellfish harvested in the waters of our state are safe to eat. It uses national water quality standards to classify commercial shellfish harvesting areas in Washington.

A map of the 2013 threatened areas and more information on the [status of shellfish harvesting areas](#) is available on the Department of Health website.

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