



News Release

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Contacts: [Marqise Allen](#), Communications Office
[Kelly Stowe](#), Communications Office

360-236-4072

360-236-4022

Pollution to close shellfish harvest in one area; 14 others listed as threatened

Fecal bacteria levels force new restrictions to protect shellfish consumers

OLYMPIA — The state Department of Health has closed harvesting in part of Vaughn Bay in Pierce County due to high levels of fecal bacteria. Health officials also identified 14 more of Washington’s 101 commercial shellfish growing areas that could be closed in the future if fecal pollution continues to get worse.

“The good news is that the pollution problems in almost all these areas can be found and fixed,” said Bob Woolrich, Growing Area section manager. “There have been many successful pollution correction projects using partnerships with local and state agencies, Tribes, and others.”

The agency shellfish program evaluates the state’s shellfish growing areas every year to see if water quality is approaching unsafe limits. If so, areas are listed as “threatened” with closure.

Shellfish harvesting areas threatened with closure include: **Grays Harbor County** – Grays Harbor; **Jefferson County** – Hood Canal near Dosewallips State Park; **King County** – Poverty Bay; **Kitsap County** – Port Orchard Passage; **Mason County** – Hood Canal near Alderbrook and Pickering Passage (McLane Cove); **Pacific County** – Bay Center and near the mouths of the Naselle and Nemah rivers; **Pierce County** – Penrose Point and Rocky Bay; **Snohomish County** – Port Susan; **Thurston County** – Henderson Inlet; **Whatcom County** – Portage Bay.

Being designated as “threatened” can serve as an early warning to help focus pollution correction work that can help avoid closures. Pollution investigation and efforts to fix the problems are underway in several threatened areas and will begin soon in others.

The agency has invested more than \$6 million over the past three years in pollution reduction projects. The money comes from federal National Estuary Program funds aimed to support local governments to begin pollution identification and correction programs in shellfish harvesting

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areas. These programs are a proven way to open shellfish beds that have been closed. Fecal bacteria come from animal and human waste, and may contaminate shellfish and make people who eat them sick.

A map of the 2014 threatened areas and more information on the [status of shellfish harvesting areas](#) is available on the Department of Health website.

The goal of the Department of Health's Office of Shellfish and Water Protection 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.

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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