

Dungeness commercial shellfish closure: Update

In 2000, following the State Department of Health's closure of portions of commercial shellfish beds in Dungeness Bay, a number of state and local agencies, the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe and local citizens met to develop and implement a closure response strategy. The *Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan* requires the development of a closure response strategy following a shellfish area downgrade. The response strategy outlines specific tasks and schedules and will help coordinate a multi-agency effort to address fecal coliform bacterial sources affecting shellfish beds in Dungeness Bay. The *Dungeness Bay Clean Water Strategy* has been completed. The actions now need to be carried out, made more urgent by the expansion of the closure area to include an additional 100 acres in March 2001.



The state Department of Ecology (Ecology) is working on a related water cleanup plan for several streams that flow into the bay because they fail to meet state water quality standards for fecal coliform bacteria. The shellfish closure response strategy and water cleanup plan will be coordinated to reach a common goal—improving water quality in Dungeness Bay.

Shellfish response process

The state Department of Health, Office of Food Safety and Shellfish Programs (state Health), is responsible for reclassifying shellfish areas where levels of fecal coliform bacteria have exceeded the water quality standard for commercial shellfish harvest. State Health issues the initial reclassification order and documentation report. After a 28-day appeal period, they issue a final order and the reclassification takes effect.

Under the *Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan*, state Health is required to initiate a closure response process following the initial downgrade of a shellfish area. In 2000, state Health convened a response group consisting of state and local agencies, tribes and other agencies to develop the strategy. The response group identified Clallam County as lead agency and has now developed a strategy to restore water quality in the affected areas.

Under state law, Clallam County is required to form a shellfish protection district and establish a shellfish protection program within 180 days of the final order. The county is currently preparing to designate a Clean Water District for the lower Dungeness watershed.

Water cleanup planning

The federal Clean Water Act requires Ecology to develop water cleanup plans for water bodies in the state that do not meet state water quality standards. Waters in Matriotti and Meadowbrook Creeks, and the Dungeness River below Highway 101, do not meet state water quality standards for fecal coliform bacteria. For this reason, Ecology is conducting a water cleanup plan to control the sources of pollution.

Water from all three streams flows into the downgraded shellfish area, so the water cleanup plan is closely related to restoration in Dungeness Bay.

The first step in the water cleanup plan is a water quality study. The study identifies areas of the streams being polluted by sources of fecal coliform bacteria, and determines the amount of pollution reduction needed for a healthy bay,



streams, and river. Fecal coliform bacteria can get into water from many sources, including failing septic tanks, municipal stormwater runoff, runoff from agricultural areas or areas frequented by wildlife.

Ecology began the water quality study in the Dungeness watershed in November 1999. The technical report on the study is anticipated to be final in the summer of 2001.

Study results will then be used in developing the required water cleanup plan that will help these waters meet state water quality standards.

Working together in our watershed

The water cleanup plan and shellfish closure response strategy have different legal requirements and timelines, but they will be integrated at the local level. The shellfish closure response strategy will include local actions that begin immediately. When Ecology's water quality study is complete, the response strategy may be adapted to incorporate study findings.

Staff from the departments of Health and Ecology have been working closely with local entities to ensure that these processes work together and are integrated with the considerable amount of related local effort ongoing in the Dungeness watershed.

Contacts for more information

Clallam County

Tania Busch-Weak,
Environmental Health (360) 417-2328
Valerie Wilson,
Natural Resources, (360) 417-2543

Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

Lyn Muench, (360) 681-4631

State Health Department

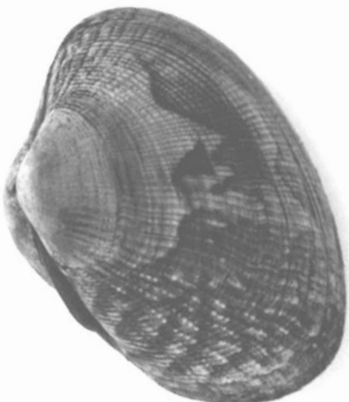
Don Melvin, (360) 236-3320

State Department of Ecology

Jeannette Barreca, (360) 407-6556

Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team

Harriet Beale, (360) 725-5442



For more information, check out the complete text of the Puget Sound plan, additional fact sheets about the update process, and information about the Action Team at www.psat.wa.gov or call the Action Team at (360) 725-5444 or 1 (800) 54-SOUND. If you need these materials in an alternative format, call our TDD number 1-800-833-6388.