News from the State Dept. of Health

The Washington State Department of Health monitors water quality monthly at a network of sampling stations in Henderson Inlet and Nisqually Reach. Over the past year, the department has upgraded harvest classifications in both areas due to improved water quality conditions.

Henderson Inlet

For the first time since the mid-eighties, the Department of Health in January 2010 was able to lift harvest restrictions on most shellfish growing areas in Henderson Inlet. The areas had been off limits to harvesting for five days after rainfall of one inch or more. The southern part of the bay remains prohibited to harvesting due to pollution concerns from Woodland Creek.

Nisqually Reach

In October 2009, the Department of Health lifted harvesting restrictions on 21 acres of the Nisqually Reach shellfish growing area. The area is located and owned by the McAlister Creek Unit and Puget Sound just west of the Nisqually flats. This is the fourth and final upgrade in a series of improvements that were initially downsized in 1992. While marine water quality is improving in most of the growing area, shellfish harvesting is prohibited in portions of the area due to elevated coliform levels in the shoreline drainage.

Shellfish Protection District News

Produced by Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department, Environmental Health Division

EASINESS FOR WATER

War every splashing upon our ear, with every stroke harvested on a serene day, with every breath that nature breathes upon us, Puget Sound is at her best, when clean and healthy. With every splash upon an oar, with every breath harvested on a serene day, with every breath that nature breathes upon us, Puget Sound is at her best, when clean and healthy.

Septic Program May Head to Nisqually Reach...continued

In 2006 and 2007, septic systems along a 2-mile stretch of shoreline near Mill Point were tested after the state Department of Health reported numerous drainage pipes discharging local community sewage into the bay. One of those systems tested were failing. While all of those failing systems were repaired, many have never been tested. Pollution projects throughout Puget Sound have shown that “fix it and forget it” doesn’t last. A stakeholder committee, appointed by the Thurston County Health Board, is now working to develop a proposal to help improve water quality all along the Nisqually Reach. The committee is made up of property owners, homeowners associations, shellfish growers, business owners, residents, developers, septic professionals, the Nisqually Tribe, and local and state government representatives.

The advisory committee met for the first time in March 2010 and plans to have a draft proposal by September. Public meetings will then be held to talk about water quality issues and details of a draft proposal.

The success of any program depends on the support of people who will live with it and implement it, so your concerns and perspectives are VERY important to us.

You can follow the committee’s progress on www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/nisqually.html. You can also send environmental health colleagues ideas to place it in the truth.

Inspect septic systems and pump tanks regularly.

Fix septic systems and pump tanks regularly.

Take cars to a commercial car wash, where water is handled properly.

Use compost instead of fertilizers to grow a healthy lawn and garden.

We hope this newsletter also advance broader cleanup plans by the federal Clean Water Act, commonly known as the CWA, because Henderson Inlet and the Nisqually Reach are listed on the state’s list of impaired water bodies (TMDL stands for “Total Maximum Daily Load.”)

Ecology will continue to coordinate efforts to reduce fecal coliform in these watersheds. Reductions are needed for the Nisqually Waternshed by 2013 and Henderson Watershed by 2018.

Shellfish Protection District News

Restoration of Henderson Inlet and Nisqually Reach - It Can Happen!

With every splash upon our ear, with every stroke harvested on a serene day, with every breath that nature breathes upon us, Puget Sound is at her best, when clean and healthy.
For some of us, shellfish eating and harvesting is a way of life; for others an occasional treat. However, the health of the environment where shellfish grow ultimately affects us all. If pollution levels are too high to produce consumable shellfish, then all can be affected.

The Clear Choices for Clean Water program provides generations of opportunity for people to take simple actions to protect various environments. Items such as native plants selected for your particular growing conditions, dog-bag disposal devices, or reusable fertilizers and coupons for septic system pumping all help you make and keep our Puget Sound clean.

We have installed 116 household connections in the Henderson and Nisqually watersheds to date, which is a great first step to protecting your family’s health and the quality of your water for the future! Call Thurston County Public Health at (360) 466-5777 or visit the Thurston Conservation District website at www.thurstoncd.com for more information.

One day we want to see more land on private properties near the beach, which will improve the quality of the primary drinking water source for over 1 million people in Thurston County.

This message is brought to you by the Thurston County Public Health and Human Services and the Thurston Conservation District.

Some practices are simple, such as using a cloth napkin instead of a paper napkin, for example. Other practices are more difficult, such as replacing your septic system. A thorough inspection and replacement of a septic system is recommended every 3 to 5 years. By replacing your septic system, you can improve the quality of the water from your property, which ultimately protects the quality of the Henderson Watershed.

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