



News Release

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TESTS SHOW POSSIBLE HENDERSON INLET POLLUTION SOURCES

OLYMPIA – A scientific evaluation of bacterial pollution sources for the southern portion of Henderson Inlet shows the E-coli bacteria comes from a variety of human, animal and bird sources. The study ran from February of 2000 through May of 2001 and was a cooperative effort of Thurston County Environmental Health and Doctor Mansour Samadpour of the University of Washington. The final report was finished in late January and is now being released to the public. The testing looked at the DNA of E-coli bacteria found in the waters of Woodland Creek and two small creeks near Swayne Drive, which empty into Henderson Inlet and in samples collected from marine waters and sediments in Henderson Inlet. Those findings were then compared to E-coli types from a library of samples kept by Doctor Samadpour.

Environmental Health Specialist Linda Hofstad says, “We were able to match the pollution samples with known sources 87-percent of the time, which is very high for this type of research.” Among the findings-

- The “picture” of non-point pollution in Henderson Inlet showed fecal coliform bacteria came from 27 different types of animals.
- The more urban Woodland Creek watershed showed the main sources were human, canine, birds and dogs.
- The more rural Swayne Creek watershed revealed the main sources were birds, canine, deer and rodents.

The DNA typing study was undertaken as part of the larger investigation into bacterial pollution that has caused the closure of commercial shellfish beds in some areas of Henderson Inlet. A similar closure has impacted some areas of the Nisqually Reach.

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Hofstad says the information will be helpful in designing plans to recover water quality. “While these results are specific to Henderson Inlet, they will be useful to people who are trying to address non-point pollution in other areas. They confirm that non-point pollution really comes from many locations and that we need to consider a variety of sources if we are going to be successful in our efforts to improve water quality in Henderson Inlet.”

The information from the study will be passed along to the stakeholder group that is currently being formed for a Shellfish Protection District for Henderson Inlet. A similar group is being formed for the Nisqually Reach District. The groups will help form action plans for recovery of water quality in the two areas. Natural Resource Program Manager Mark Swartout says, “The information will be valuable to the stakeholder groups as they develop strategies to reduce bacterial pollution from those sources which we have some control over.”

Copies of the DNA report are available on the Thurston County web site at www.co.thurston.wa.us/shellfish/. Also available at that address is additional information regarding the Shellfish Protection Districts.