



Shellfish Protection Districts Are Now a Reality

You Can Help Guide Their Future

Shellfish Protection Districts

One year ago, Thurston County sent a notice to all residents within the Henderson Inlet and Nisqually Reach watersheds announcing the county's obligation to create shellfish protection districts for the two areas.

Due to an unacceptably high level of fecal coliform bacterial contamination in the water, the state Department of Health had to restrict (and in some cases close entirely) shellfish harvesting in the two inlets in 2000 and 2001. Under this action, state law requires Thurston County to create the shellfish protection districts.

The purpose of this bulletin is to keep you up-to-date on the activities of the past year, and to thank all the citizens who have worked on this important, and complex, issue so far.

*Thurston County Office of Program and Budget Development
709-3079 or e-mail swartom@co.thurston.wa.us*

March 11, 2002 is the deadline for mailing stakeholder group applications!

You Now Live in a Shellfish Protection District

If you've received this newsletter, you now live in either the Nisqually Reach or Henderson Inlet shellfish protection district. (Visit www.co.thurston.wa.us/shellfish to view maps.) The Nisqually Reach district was created by Ordinance 12680. The Henderson Inlet district was created by Ordinance 12679. The ordinances:

- Seek to prevent further downgrades and restore commercial shellfish growing areas in the two inlets.
- Call upon existing rules and programs to curb fecal bacterial contamination from land-use activities, failing septic systems, stormwater runoff, and agricultural practices.
- Direct Thurston County to perform more water-quality tests to determine the sources of pollution.
- Set the stage for Thurston County and residents to assess whether new programs and revenues are needed in the future. (The ordinances themselves do not impose any new fees or taxes.)

Thurston County commissioners approved the ordinances Dec. 17, 2001.

Volunteers Needed for Stakeholder Committees

The first phase of the shellfish recovery efforts will begin when Thurston County commissioners appoint a stakeholder group for each of the districts. The stakeholder groups will be charged with recommending a comprehensive, long-term approach to restoring shellfish harvesting in the two inlets.

The stakeholder groups will begin work in April 2002 and end in July 2003. The groups will include 11 stakeholders who live or work within the district's boundaries. The desire is for the stakeholders to represent the following interests:

- Commercial agriculture, one member;
- Shellfish growers, one member;
- Builders/developers, one member;
- City representatives from Lacey and Olympia, one member from each city;
- County residents, four members; and
- City residents, two members.

We are asking for a letter of interest from those who want to serve as a stakeholder. Letters sent by mail must be postmarked no later than March 11, 2002.

What qualities are we looking for?

1. Ability to commit the time necessary to complete the task – at least meeting once a month and time to review material and come prepared for each meeting.
2. Willingness to work with diverse points of view.
3. Ability to help resolve complex issues.

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Stakeholder Committees, continued

Letters of interest should:

1. Provide your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address.
2. Identify the shellfish protection district in which you live or work (either Henderson Inlet or Nisqually Reach).
3. Answer these questions:
 - A. Why are you interested in participating in this stakeholder group?
 - B. What will you bring to the group to help accomplish the goal of restoring shellfish beds?

Letters of interest can be mailed, faxed, e-mailed, or submitted through our web site to:

Mark J. Swartout
2000 Lakeridge Dr. S.W., Bldg. 1, Room 221
Olympia, WA 98502
Phone: 709-3079 FAX: 786-5409
E-mail: swartom@co.thurston.wa.us
Web: www.co.thurston.wa.us/shellfish

Septic System Workshops Planned

Failing septic systems contribute to fecal coliform bacteria in the Henderson Inlet and Nisqually Reach watersheds. Find out how to keep your septic system operating smoothly at these free workshops:

Henderson Inlet: Wednesday April 24, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., South Bay Grange, 3918 Sleater-Kinney Rd. N.E.; **Nisqually Reach:** Tuesday, May 14, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., South Puget Sound Community College at Hawks Prairie, 1401 Marvin Rd. N.E.

Please call in advance to register: 754-4111. The TDD line is 754-2933.

County Applies for Grant Funding

Thurston County has applied for three Coastal Zone Management Grants from the state Department of Ecology. The first two applications seek a total of \$53,500 for planning the shellfish protection districts. The third application is for \$11,606 to reduce fecal coliform bacteria from dogs in the Henderson Inlet Watershed. These grants are awarded on a competitive basis. The Department of Ecology will likely announce its decision within the next few months.

Common Questions and Answers About Shellfish Protection Districts

- Q. What is a shellfish protection district?
- A. A shellfish protection district is a geographic area designated by a county to protect water quality and tideland resources. It is required by state law under RCW 90.72.
- Q. Now that shellfish protection districts have been formed, will I be paying new fees or taxes?
- A. The ordinances creating the shellfish protection districts do not impose any new fees or taxes. The stakeholder groups will craft a long-term strategy for recovering commercial shellfish harvesting, and might eventually recommend a funding approach for the Board of County Commissioners to consider.
- Q. I don't have an interest in serving on a stakeholders committee, but I still want to be involved. How can I keep track of this issue?
- A. Visit our web site at www.co.thurston.wa.us/shellfish. Updates and meeting notices will be posted on the site. We will also work closely with the media to keep residents informed of newsworthy issues.
- Q. I don't live in either of the shellfish protection districts. How can I learn more about what is happening?
- A. All Thurston County residents will be welcome to attend stakeholder group meetings, public workshops, and hearings as this effort moves forward.



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more inside!



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