



April 12 Workshop Results

June 2001

Shellfish Protection District

On April 12, a broad spectrum of people met to discuss how Thurston County should form a shellfish protection district for the Henderson Inlet and Nisqually Reach/McAllister Creek watersheds. About 40 local residents and interest-group members attended the meeting and expressed a wide range of opinions. Among the group were local homeowners, farmers, master builders, environmental interests and shellfish growers. Participants came from the two watersheds and from Thurston County at large.

The April 12 meeting focused on issues that form the very backbone of a shellfish protection district: What should the boundaries be? Should the district's workplan be spelled out now or phased in over time? Which activities make sense? This bulletin summarizes the outcome of those discussions.

Our thanks to all who attended. You will receive an invitation to the next workshop when the date and location are finalized.

*Thurston County Environmental Health Division
(360) 754-4111*



A refresher on the Shellfish Protection District mandate

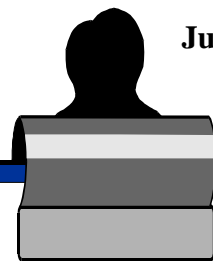
In November and December 2000, the state Department of Health closed commercial shellfish harvesting in part of Henderson Inlet and Nisqually Reach/McAllister Creek watersheds. Harvesting was closed because fecal coliform bacteria levels in the two areas were unacceptably high. The closures triggered a state law that now requires Thurston County to form a shellfish protection district. How and where the district(s) is formed, and its program of work, is up to residents and Thurston County to collectively decide.



The April 12 format

The April 12 workshop began with "listening posts" where Thurston County staff heard comments from individual participants. Following a brief presentation, participants broke into small-group discussions and recorded their preferences on an "option survey." The results of this survey are featured on the back page.

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NEWS FLASH!

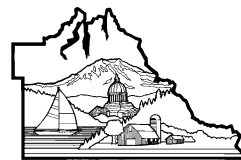
On June 1, another 300 acres of Henderson Inlet north of Lacey were placed under commercial harvesting restrictions imposed by the state Department of Health. Under the new restrictions, shellfish harvesters must wait five days to harvest shellfish after it rains half an inch or more over a 24-hour period. This is roughly how long it takes for the water quality to



improve after storms wash pollutants into the Inlet. The restrictions effectively mean that no

shellfish harvesting can take place for about one-third of the year in the downgraded area. Commercial shellfish harvesting was closed completely in nine other acres of Henderson Inlet in late 2000. Seventy-four acres in the Nisqually Reach watershed were also closed at that time.

True or false? Congress once considered defining state lines based on watershed boundaries. (Answer on back.)



THURSTON COUNTY
WASHINGTON
SINCE 1852

Majority response from April 12 workshop

Boundaries



Create two separate shellfish protection districts based on watershed boundaries.

Approach

Take a phased approach: correct known sources, increase monitoring, report test findings, and develop a plan for further actions.

Activities

Agricultural activities: Have the Thurston Conservation District increase technical assistance and cost-sharing to encourage farmers to develop – and implement – plans for handling animal waste. The district’s efforts should be sustained.

Land use activities:

- Evaluate whether new development proposals would affect shellfish resources, and avoid or mitigate impacts. Refer proposals to watershed and river councils for review and comment.
- Evaluate and update Thurston County’s Comprehensive Plan, development regulations, Critical Areas Ordinance, and Shoreline Master Program to address shellfish issues. (These county policies govern growth, land-use and environmental protection requirements.)
- Make sure developers are complying with permit requirements.

Water sampling: Increase monitoring to identify the sources and locations of pollution.

Stormwater activities: Increase stormwater activities within the districts without decreasing work elsewhere.

Septic maintenance and testing: Apply a risk-based program: Inspect those septic systems most likely to cause water quality problems.

Septic construction and permit standards: Increase the standards for treating septic effluent.

Septic repairs: Participants supported all the repair options presented on the survey. The favored option was to maintain the current program where repairs are done to the maximum extent of the site. Many people also supported the option of no discretionary Table 6 repairs (non-standard repairs) if an off-site alternative is available. Sewer and community drainfields, where appropriate, also had support.

Septic system education: Enhance Thurston County’s septic education program.

Other

There was general support for having Thurston County more actively enforce existing county regulations on land use, septic systems and agriculture. Also, several people suggested using incentives to encourage people to voluntarily change pollution-causing practices.



Did you guess correctly?

The answer is true AND false. In 1890, John Wesley Powell, then director of the U.S. Geological Survey, proposed creating independently-governed commonwealths (akin to states) in the arid west based on watershed boundaries. He believed creating commonwealths from watersheds made sense because all the property owners would share a joint purpose in protecting their shared resource. He also wanted the federal government to classify public lands according to their potential use. For example, certain lands would be available for irrigation, grazing or forest-preservation. Settlers should be given a map, he said, so they could decide which lands to own based on their needs. Congress was not moved by Powell’s vision. Law-makers believed it obstructed the nation’s manifest destiny of settlement and speculation.