



News Release

For immediate release: June 1, 2005

(05-065)

| | | |
|-----------|---|--------------|
| Contacts: | Don Melvin, Shellfish program | 360-236-3320 |
| | Donn Moyer, Communications Office | 360-236-4076 |
| | Art Starry, Thurston County Health Department | 360-786-5456 |

Commercial shellfish harvest will be limited in part of Henderson Inlet

OLYMPIA — The Washington State Department of Health announced that it plans to close 49 acres of shellfish beds in Henderson Inlet because of bacterial contamination in the water. The downgrade — effective in late June — is required because fecal coliform levels indicating the presence of human sewage and animal wastes exceed state and federal water quality standards.

“The Henderson Inlet downgrade highlights the challenges of keeping shellfish growing areas open in rapidly developing watersheds,” said Don Melvin of the agency’s shellfish program. “Despite efforts to identify and correct pollution problems in Henderson Inlet, water quality is getting worse.”

[Henderson Inlet](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Publicat/2005_news/documents/henderson.pdf) (http://www.doh.wa.gov/Publicat/2005_news/documents/henderson.pdf) is located in south Puget Sound just north of the city of Lacey. The Henderson Inlet watershed includes a large portion of Lacey, the eastern portion of Olympia, and areas of Thurston County.

The Department of Health first limited shellfish harvesting in southern Henderson Inlet in the mid 1980s when 125 acres were classified as “prohibited” and 55 acres were classified as “conditionally approved.” In 2000 and 2001 more of the southern end of the inlet was downgraded to “prohibited” and “conditionally approved,” with the net result of increasing the area closed to commercial harvesting to approximately 182 acres. This latest change in classification will increase the closed area to a total of 231 acres. The “conditionally approved” portion of Henderson Inlet is closed to shellfish harvest for a period of five days following 24-hour rainfall totals of one-half inch or more.

Henderson Inlet water quality is affected by a variety of pollution sources that include stormwater runoff, failing on-site sewage systems, and waste from domestic and wild animals.

Henderson Inlet shellfish area

June 1, 2005

Page 2

Following the 2000 downgrade a closure response team formed, consisting of representatives from Thurston County; the cities of Lacey and Olympia; Thurston Conservation District; the Nisqually and Squaxin Tribes; the Puget Sound Action Team; the state departments of Health, Ecology, and Transportation; citizens and shellfish growers. In 2001 Thurston County created a shellfish protection district for the watershed and established a citizen stakeholder committee that put together a pollution cleanup plan for the inlet. Efforts are ongoing by this group to locate and correct the pollution sources and to involve and educate watershed residents.

Thurston County's Web site has detailed information on the County's restoration program for [Henderson Inlet](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/shellfish) (www.co.thurston.wa.us/shellfish). Restoration of closed and threatened shellfish growing areas is also a priority of the *2005-2007 Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery Plan*. The [Puget Sound Action Team's Web site](http://www.psat.wa.gov/) (http://www.psat.wa.gov/) has information on the state's strategy to protect shellfish areas in Puget Sound.

###

Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for a healthy dose of information.