



News Release

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Cathy Wolfe
District One
Diane Oberquell
District Two
Kevin O'Sullivan
District Three

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Contact: Mark Swartout, Natural Resource Program Manager, 360-357-2491

DRAFT PLAN READY FOR SHELLFISH PROTECTION DISTRICTS

OLYMPIA -- The public is invited to comment on a proposed plan to create shellfish protection districts for the Henderson Inlet and Nisqually Reach areas. The plan will be explained at a public meeting to be held the evening of October first.

The proposal is a reaction to the closure of 83 acres of commercial shellfish beds in Henderson Inlet and Nisqually Reach and the recent downgrade of additional acreage in Henderson Inlet, which limits shellfish harvesting after heavy rainfall. State law requires creation of the shellfish districts. Thurston County officials have been working on the issue since the State Health Department announced the closures nearly a year ago. Since then, the county has conducted several public meetings and open houses, has interviewed numerous stakeholder groups and individuals and has dispensed information through mailings, television shows and the county web site (<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/shellfish/>). In fact, the draft proposal can be viewed on line.

The plan was created after hearing from area residents, homeowners, farmers, master builders, environmental groups, shellfish growers and others. It calls for creation of two separate districts following watershed boundaries. In phase one the draft proposal suggests correction of known sources of fecal coliform contamination, continued public involvement and in-depth study of the problem. The plan does NOT call for any increased taxes or fees for phase one, nor any new regulations.

The public has a chance to hear about, and comment on, the proposal Monday night, October first at Heritage Hall at the Thurston County Fairgrounds at 3054 Carpenter Road S. E. The meeting begins with an open house at 6 PM. A presentation and question and answer session will run from 6:30 to 8.

Another public meeting will be held to review a draft shellfish protection district ordinance before a final hearing is held with the Board of Thurston County Commissioners. The public will be notified when dates for those meetings are set.

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