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Budd Inlet Closed for Shellfish Harvesting
Diarrhetic Shellfish Poison (DSP) at unsafe levels

A marine biotoxin that causes diarrhetic shellfish poison (DSP) has been detected at unsafe levels in shellfish in Budd Inlet in Thurston County. As a result, Washington Department of Health and Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department have closed all of Budd Inlet to recreational shellfishing from Boston Harbor and the tip of Cooper Point in the north to the southern end of the inlet along Olympia’s waterfront.

Shellfish sampled this week from West Bay in Budd Inlet contained DSP biotoxin at 17 micrograms per 100 grams shellfish, which is above the safety limit of 16 micrograms per 100 grams established by the Washington State Department of Health.

Warning signs have been posted at public beaches alerting people not to collect shellfish due to the biotoxin closure. The existing swimming and shellfish harvest closures due to pollution in inner Budd Inlet and near wastewater treatment plant outfalls remain in effect.

DSP biotoxin is an emerging health threat in Washington State. The first confirmed cases of illness caused by DSP in Washington State were in July 2011 when three people were sickened after eating shellfish harvested in Sequim Bay in Clallam County. This Budd Inlet closure is the first DSP closure to occur in South Puget Sound waters.

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DSP symptoms can begin from 30 minutes to 12 hours after eating contaminated shellfish, causing nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, with diarrhea being the most commonly reported symptom. Most symptoms subside within 72 hours.

DSP biotoxins are produced by naturally occurring algae, and can accumulate in the flesh of molluscan shellfish, making the shellfish unsafe to eat. Marine biotoxins are not destroyed by cooking or freezing. Shellfish harvested commercially that are available in stores and restaurants are tested for toxin prior to distribution, and are safe to eat.

Recreational shellfish harvesters should always call the DOH Biotoxin Hotline at 1-800-562-5632 or check the DOH website at http://www.doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety.htm before harvesting shellfish anywhere in Washington State.

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