



CITY OF BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 22, 2011

Contact: Lance Newkirk, Public Works Director
City of Bainbridge Island
lnewkirk@bainbridgewa.gov
(206) 842-2016

Shellfish Harvest Areas Challenged, But Show Improvements

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, March 22, 2011 – The Washington State Department of Health Office of Shellfish and Water Protection has reclassified two island-adjacent commercial shellfish harvest areas as a result of routine biotoxin analysis and a review of shoreline pollution conditions and marine water quality data.

The Manzanita geoduck tract of the Port Orchard Passage commercial shellfish growing area was temporarily closed due to a paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) toxicity sample taken from within the Manzanita tract on February 28, with a PSP concentration of 236 micrograms. However, the Manzanita tract was reopened as of March 14, as further testing revealed no continued PSP threat.

PSP is a naturally-occurring toxin, called a "biotoxin," produced by some species of microscopic algae. PSP can concentrate in shellfish and, when eaten, can cause severe illness, and sometimes death, in humans. The National Shellfish Sanitation Program requires that growing areas be closed when PSP toxin concentration is equal to or exceeds 80 micrograms.

A 140-acre section within the Port Madison commercial shellfish growing area between Suquamish and Agate Point off the north end of the Island has been upgraded from Prohibited to Approved. This reclassification was prompted by a comprehensive review of treatment practices at the Suquamish Wastewater Treatment Plant, improved shoreline conditions and marine water quality sampling results in the area.

Port Madison Bay Harbor was the focus of significant illicit discharge detection and elimination (IDDE) efforts by city staff in 2008 and 2009 which contributed to improvements in the reclassified area.

An IDDE investigation in the fall of 2008, one of the first under what was then the City's newly-established IDDE ordinance (BIMC 15.22), found four failing septic systems along the eastern outer bay shoreline of the harbor. With assistance from the Kitsap County Health District, all failing systems were replaced. Discharge sampling along the eastern outer bay shoreline in 2009 indicated significantly reduced bacterial contamination below levels of concern.

Questions regarding harvest of geoduck in the Manzanita tract within the Port Orchard Passage commercial geoduck growing area should be directed to Frank Cox (360-236-3309) or Jerry Borchert (360-236-3328) of the Washington State Department of Health.

The reopening of the Port Madison commercial shellfish harvest area is anticipated to be finalized by April 13. For specific information regarding the Port Madison shellfish growing area reclassification, please contact Scott Berbells of the Washington State Department of Health at (360) 236-3324.

#