

## **Ecology Department Seeking Public Input for Geoduck Aquaculture Guidelines**

### **Local News**

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OLYMPIA - The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is asking the public for ideas to help city and county governments throughout Puget Sound address how geoduck aquaculture could be regulated under local shoreline management regulations.

Ecology is conducting two public workshops in Lacey on Thursday, March 26, to gather comments from the public. The first workshop will be held from 10 a.m. to noon and the second from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ecology headquarters, 300 Desmond Dr., downstairs auditorium.

The workshops are designed to build on recommendations of the state Shellfish Aquaculture Regulatory Committee regarding how geoduck aquaculture operations might be managed through state shoreline management guidelines.

The 2007 Legislature created the shellfish committee to help balance environmental and residential land-use concerns about intertidal beaches in Puget Sound being used for geoduck aquaculture. The broad-based committee met for 18 months and included representatives from local government, shellfish industry, environmental community, shoreline property owners, state agencies and tribal governments. Ecology's report on the committee's results was sent to the Washington Legislature last week: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0806024.html>. The committee's recommendations were sent to lawmakers in December 2008: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0906001.html>. "We worked and listened to a wide array of interests," said Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program Manager Gordon White. "The committee's recommendations mark a good starting point to ultimately help our cities and counties determine how they want to regulate geoduck operations within their jurisdictions." White said aquaculture is one type of preferred use allowed in shoreline areas under the Shoreline Management Act, passed by voters in 1972. The Act has three broad goals: \* Protect shoreline natural resources. \* Promote public access. \* Encourage water dependent uses, such as aquaculture, ports and recreation. Counties and cities with marine waters and large lakes and river systems adopt specific rules that apply to shoreline development called Shoreline Master Programs. Many jurisdictions, he said, are in the process of changing their programs to reflect state guidelines updated in 2003. On Feb. 24, 2009, Ecology approved most of Pierce County's interim aquaculture regulations as part of the county's shoreline management rule. Based on previous decisions by the state Shorelines Hearings Board, Ecology rejected limiting the hours a shellfish farm could operate. Since Pierce County wasn't able to provide Ecology an inventory of shoreline areas that could be used by aquaculture, the department also declined the county's plan to prohibit the use of nets and tubes in urban and residential shoreline areas. The regulations amend the county's existing shoreline use regulations and will sunset once the county completes a comprehensive update of its 35 year old Shoreline Master Program. White said the state shellfish committee will continue to provide Ecology advice for the department's aquaculture guidelines for local governments. The committee also will provide oversight on research being done by the University of Washington Sea Grant Program designed to answer questions about possible environmental effects of geoduck aquaculture on Puget

Sound. The research program will be completed by 2012 if adequate funding is obtained.