

Last razor-clam dig of the season tentatively set

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) today announced a tentative razor-clam dig scheduled for later this month on several coastal beaches.

A final decision will be made next week after marine toxin tests are run to determine if the clams are safe to eat. If the tests come back as expected, four ocean beaches will open on Saturday, May 15 and two beaches will open the following day. The openings are all on morning low tides. They are:

Saturday, May 15, 8:15 a.m., -1.6 ft.: Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks.

Sunday, May 16, 8:58 a.m., -1.6 ft.: Long Beach and Twin Harbors only.

Kalaloch beach will remain closed.

Dan Ayres, WDFW's coastal shellfish manager, reminds diggers that portions of the beach at Long Beach and Twin Harbors are closed to the public to protect nesting western snowy plovers, which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

"The birds are particularly vulnerable this time of year," said Ayres. "Signs clearly mark the area and instruct people to stay on the hard-packed sand."

The closed portion at each beach includes the area above the mean high tide line. At Long Beach, the closed areas are located north of the Oysterville Road from the state park boundary north to Leadbetter Point. At Twin Harbors, the closed areas are located from just south of Midway Beach Road to the first beach-access trail at Grayland Beach State Park. Clam diggers are reminded that the entire northern section of Long Beach is closed to all driving starting at noon each day during this razor clam opener.

No digging will be allowed after noon at any of the beaches. Under WDFW rules, harvesters may take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 taken, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's limit must be kept in a separate container.

All diggers 15 years or older must have an applicable 2010-11 fishing license. Options include buying a combination license or an annual shellfish/seaweed license. Also available are razor-clam only licenses in annual or three-day only versions. Descriptions of the licensing options are on the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov> .

Licenses can be purchased online or at any of the approximately 600 vendors who sell recreational licenses. A list of vendors is at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/vendors/>

The next razor-clam season will likely open in October. Ayres says the precise date will depend on tides, the results of marine toxin tests, negotiations with tribes that share the fishery and WDFW's razor-clam assessment, which will be conducted this summer.

Prospective clambers for this month's dig should be warned that overnight and weekend repairs to Interstate 5 between Tacoma and Lacey will make it considerably more difficult to get to and from Washington's coast. A schedule of closures can be found at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/pavementrehab/i5martinwayto48thst>

Ayres estimates that approximately 300,000 trips will have been made to Washington beaches to dig clams by the time this season closes. Since the season opened last October, an estimated four million razor-clams were harvested from beaches that stretch from the mouth of the Columbia River north to Kalaloch Beach in Olympic National Park. That number is considerably higher than the 2.9 million average for the past 10 years. Ayres says the larger harvest reflects an increase in the total number of clams available "compliments of Mother Nature."

WDFW also estimates that razor-clam diggers spent approximately \$27 million during their visits to coastal communities during this season. The estimate is based on data collected during a survey of Washington razor clam diggers, sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and conducted by the University of Washington.