

## **Health alert: E. coli detected in western Hood Canal wells**

### **Local News**

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The state Department of Health urges Mason County well users along the western shore of Hood Canal to have their water tested. *E. coli* has been detected in the wells of three public water systems in the area over the past two weeks. The contamination may have been caused by recent heavy rains. It's likely that more wells have been contaminated. [Owners of all private wells and very small water systems](#) (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Publications/331-349.pdf>), known as Group B systems, are strongly encouraged to have their water tested for [coliform bacteria](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Programs/coliform.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Programs/coliform.htm)). Older wells and poorly built wells are especially vulnerable to contamination.

The affected area is within 2,000 feet of the western shore of Hood Canal from the northern Mason County line south to the intersection of U.S. Highway 101 and State Route 106. "It's very rare to find *E. coli* in several wells at the same time," said Clark Halvorson, manager of southwest regional operations for the Department of Health's Office of Drinking Water. "Our staff believes runoff from the unusually heavy rains early this month allowed contaminated water to seep into the water table, which may have contributed to some of the problems." Well users and water systems can call Mason County Health Department at 360-427-9670 (ext. 400) for information about where to pick up and drop off sample water bottles. More information is on the [Mason County website](#) ([www.co.mason.wa.us/health/envhealth/water\\_lab/index.php](http://www.co.mason.wa.us/health/envhealth/water_lab/index.php)), the [Department of Health's website](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Publications/331-242\\_4-21-06.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Publications/331-242_4-21-06.pdf)), and the [Department of Ecology website](#) ([www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/la.../DWLabsScopesInternet.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/la.../DWLabsScopesInternet.pdf)). The three Mason County water systems currently under boil water advisories are Potlatch Beach Mutual, Canal Mutual, and Minerva Terrace. The three advisories collectively affect about 160 homes and businesses. The health advisories include several precautionary steps customers should take: Use boiled water or bottled water for drinking, brushing teeth, preparing food, dishwashing, and making ice. Tap water should be brought to a rolling boil for one minute and allowed to cool before use. The advisories will remain in effect until the state health department and water system operators are satisfied there is no longer a health threat. Customers will be notified as the advisories end. There have been no reports of illness from users of the three water systems.