

Pollution Threatening Commercial Shellfish Grow Areas

Local News

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Posted on : June 2, 2011 at 5:20 am

OLYMPIA, Wash. - Nine of Washington's 101 commercial shellfish growing areas are threatened with closure this year because of pollution. Sixteen growing areas were listed as threatened areas in 2009 and 10 in 2010. The threatened shellfish areas for 2011, listed by county, are: **Grays Harbor:** Pacific coast; **Jefferson:** Port Townsend; **Kitsap:** Dyes Inlet; **Mason:** Pickering Passage; **Pacific:** Naselle River; **Pierce:** Burley Lagoon, Filucy Bay; **Skagit:** Padilla Bay; **Snohomish:** South Skagit Bay. Each year, the state Department of Health looks at water quality data collected from shellfish harvesting areas. In nine areas, data for this year show that poor water quality or failure to manage potential pollution sources could result in the downgrade of the harvest area. Work is underway to find and fix pollution problems in many of the threatened shellfish growing areas. "We're seeing a lower number of threatened areas, but the closure of any harvest area has a direct and sometimes catastrophic affect on individual commercial shellfish harvesters, tribes, or the public," said Bob Woolrich, growing area manager for the agency. "We can't afford to lose more of our valuable shellfish harvesting areas to pollution."

Recently, the agency downgraded more than 4,000 acres in the Samish Bay shellfish growing area in Skagit County. The [Puget Sound Partnership](#), other federal and state agencies including the Department of Health, tribes, local organizations and agriculture groups (www.psp.wa.gov/pressreleases/051711_samish.php) are addressing pollution sources in the watershed to correct conditions that caused the downgrade. The state health department's Office of Shellfish and Water Protection uses national standards to classify all commercial shellfish harvesting areas in Washington. Information about [the status of shellfish harvesting areas](#) is posted on the agency website (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/grow.htm). [A map](#) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/gareports/threatareas.pdf) of the 2011 threatened areas is also available online. The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for a *healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).