

[Agencies Take Action to Prevent Wild Geoduck Poaching](#)

Local News

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Posted on : February 27, 2012 at 10:17 am

OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) are joining forces to prevent poaching of wild geoduck from Washington waters, after recent surveys in south Puget Sound indicated that the native clams are not recovering as projected. Ongoing WDFW post-harvest surveys of closed commercial geoduck tracts in southern Puget Sound indicate that recovery rates in nearly a dozen tracts have significantly slowed or declined in recent years. Biologists also observed evidence that active harvesting is occurring in closed tracts. The wild geoduck stock is jointly managed by DNR, WDFW and Puget Sound Treaty Indian Tribes. The state and tribes each have a right to 50 percent of the sustainable, allowable geoduck catch. All are responsible for estimating geoduck population size, determining sustainable yield and protecting the health of the geoduck stock and the habitat they depend upon. Once a pre-determined harvest threshold is met, a commercial tract is closed to allow natural recovery, which can take decades. We take our responsibility very seriously, future generations depend on our diligence and sustainable management. - Commissioner of Public Land Peter Goldmark

“This situation represents a significant threat to a highly valuable shellfish resource,” said WDFW Director Phil Anderson. “Geoduck poaching is particularly damaging because the species grows slowly over a long period.” While recovery on south Puget Sound’s closed commercial tracts progressed as expected until 2000, it has slowed or declined significantly over the last decade, according to state biologists. WDFW and DNR are working together on a number of fronts to respond to the stalled recovery. As part of the response, WDFW and DNR will work with tribes, which also are affected when poaching decimates wild stocks. Strategies include enforcement action aimed at preventing poaching, evaluating environmental factors that may be contributing to the decline, seeking legislative budget support for additional field enforcement and reviewing harvest regulations. The proposed house budget contains a half million dollars for increased enforcement. Geoducks are the largest of the state’s native clam species, growing to an average size of about two pounds by the time they are four to five years old. They can live for more than 100 years and reach weights close to 10 pounds. The clams are highly valuable, fetching up to \$160 per pound on the international retail market. **Wild geoduck harvest in Washington State** DNR manages the submerged marine lands in which the wild geoduck grows. At public auctions, DNR offers the right for private businesses to harvest specific quantities from specific areas of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. DNR monitors all managed harvesting activities. Goals for the State’s Geoduck Program are to encourage a stable and orderly harvest; provide maximum benefits of geoduck resources to the people of Washington; minimize affects to shoreline residents during harvests; and ensure effective enforcement of the state harvest.