

Public Invited to Comment on Draft Shellfish Protection District for Grays Harbor

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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MONTESANO, Wash. - The Grays Harbor County Environmental Health Division (EHD) has been tasked with coordinating the development of a Shellfish Protection District along the north beach of the outer coast. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) recently downgraded a portion of the north beach in the Pacific Beach and Moclips area triggering a requirement to form the district under RCW 90.72. Under the mandate, the County must designate both the geographic boundaries of the district and outline a response plan aimed at addressing the water quality issues causing the downgrades. The EHD has created a website that provides background information, access to maps with draft boundaries, a draft response plan, and a place where comments can be given. You do not have to provide your name to submit a comment, but they do ask that you indicate your relation to the potential district, i.e. are you a shellfish grower, resident of a city (Ocean shores), county resident, or an out of area beach user, etc.

Environmental Health Director Jeff Nelson said the county plans to keep this website up for at least 30-days, at which time we will compile comments and present them to the County Commissioners for consideration. As needed, documents will be amended, a public hearing scheduled and an ordinance considered for adoption. "The international water quality standards for commercial shellfish harvesting are very strict and often multiple sources contribute to fecal coliform concentrations. The draft documents we have created are aimed at inventorying existing activities and expanding monitoring efforts to better characterize potential sources in the areas along the coast that have been affected. I want to stress that there is currently no impact to recreational harvesting of Razor Clams and that recreational exposure (Swimming, wading, etc) in ocean waters does not pose a health threat. Our goal is to work with the public along with City, State, Tribal, and Federal partners to proactively maintain the commercial shellfish growing area standards and comply with the legislative intent of the statute. "For more information and to provide comment please visit the website at: <http://www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/info...cs/envhealthShellFish.asp>