

NEWS RELEASE

June 25, 2015

**MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
411 NORTH 5TH ST
SHELTON, WA 98584**

TO: KMAS, KRXY, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN, SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE SUN

RE: Mason County Shellfish Beaches in Hood Canal Closed Due to Marine Biotoxins

Shellfish samples from Hood Canal have been found to contain elevated levels of marine biotoxins that cause Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP). As a result, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has closed the beaches from the Jefferson/Mason County line to just past Sisters Point to shellfish harvest. Shellfish harvested commercially are tested for toxin prior to distribution and should be safe to eat.

Danger signs are being posted at high-use beaches, warning people not to consume shellfish from this area. The closure includes clams, oysters, mussels, scallops and other species of molluscan shellfish. This closure does not apply to shrimp. Crabmeat is not known to contain the biotoxin but the guts can contain unsafe levels. To be safe, clean crab thoroughly and discard the guts (also known as the "butter").

Marine biotoxins are not destroyed by cooking or freezing. People can become ill from eating shellfish contaminated with the naturally occurring marine algae containing toxins harmful to humans. Symptoms of PSP can appear within minutes or hours and usually begins with tingling lips and tongue, moving to the hands and feet, followed by difficulty breathing, and potentially death. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should contact a health care provider immediately. For extreme reactions call 911.

In most cases the algae that contain the toxins cannot be seen, and must be detected using laboratory testing. Therefore, recreational shellfish harvesters should check the DOH Shellfish Safety Map at doh.wa.gov/ShellfishSafety.htm or call the DOH Biotoxin Hot line at 1-800-562-5632 before harvesting shellfish anywhere in Washington State. Recreational harvesters should also check Fish and Wildlife regulations and seasons at wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish or call the Shellfish Rule Change Hotline 1-866-880-5431. You can reach Mason County Public Health staff at (360) 427-9670 ext 400, from Blefair: 360-275-4467 ext 400, Elma: 360-482-5269 ext 400


Vicki Kirkpatrick

Director, Mason County Public Health and Human Services