

NEWS RELEASE

July 24, 2015
MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
411 NORTH 5TH ST
SHELTON, WA 98584

TO: KMAS, KRXV, 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 Re-open for Harvest of some species

The levels of marine biotoxins that cause Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) in shellfish continue to drop in the water in Hood Canal, but remain high in some species of shellfish. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has reopened the beaches from the Jefferson/Mason County line to just past Sisters Point to shellfish harvest **except** for Butter Clams and Varnish Clams. Shellfish harvested commercially are tested for toxin prior to distribution and should be safe to eat.

Danger signs have been posted at high-use beaches warning people not to consume certain shellfish from the area. 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 ("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 addition nearly all beaches in Mason County are under a **Vibriosis Advisory** issued by the State Department of Health (DOH). The DOH advises that all shellfish recreationally harvested during the months of June – September should be cooked thoroughly to avoid illness due to Vibriosis. Anyone who eats raw or partially cooked fish or shellfish can become ill.

Vibrio are small bacteria found in fish and shellfish living in saltwater and in rivers and streams where freshwater meets saltwater. They multiply rapidly in warm conditions so fish and shellfish are more likely to be contaminated in the summer. Vibrio is destroyed by cooking shellfish to an internal temperature of 145 degrees for 15 seconds.

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
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