

**WHATCOM COUNTY  
Health Department**

*Leading the community in promoting  
health and preventing disease.*



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Bellingham Bay, Portage Bay, and South Whatcom Closed to Shellfish Harvest**

**BELLINGHAM**—Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning (DSP) biotoxin levels have recently increased in Bellingham Bay and now exceed the limit for safe harvest. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has closed all of Bellingham Bay, Portage Bay, **and** all waters south to the Skagit County line—including all of Larrabee State Park—to the recreational harvest of all species of molluscan shellfish. Molluscan shellfish include clams, mussels, oysters, and scallops.

Algae that contain marine biotoxins cannot be seen, and must be detected by laboratory testing. During a biotoxin event, mussels and varnish clams usually contain the highest toxin concentration. DSP and other naturally occurring biotoxins are not destroyed by cooking or freezing. Crab meat is not affected, but “crab butter” and crab entrails can harbor biotoxins so they should always be discarded.

Shellfish sold in restaurants and retail markets have been tested before distribution and are safe to eat.

Biotoxin levels can change rapidly and have been fluctuating since April. Shellfish harvesters are advised to **Know Before You Dig**. Always check for current biotoxin closures at the DOH website: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/biotoxin.htm> or call the DOH Biotoxin Hotline at 1-800-562-5632 before harvesting shellfish anywhere in Washington State.

Before harvesting, also remember to check harvest seasons and licensing requirements. Contact the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife for information about licensing and fishing regulations at [www.dfw.wa.gov](http://www.dfw.wa.gov).

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