

Shellfish grace our dinner tables, add the thrill of discovery to a seashore walk, and enrich our economy. In 1999, nearly 44 million pounds of shellfish, valued at \$79.1 million, were harvested commercially for food—almost 60% of the total value of the food fish harvest that year.

But healthy shellfish beds are being threatened by declining water quality. Bivalve shellfish such as oysters, clams, and mussels feed by filtering water that passes over the shellfish bed. Because they filter so much water—a mussel can filter up to 300 times its own weight in an hour—they are very sensitive to water pollution, and accumulate bacteria and toxins in their bodies.

Shellfish in Whatcom County are no exception. Two areas along the county's coastline, Drayton Harbor and Portage Bay, are closed to shellfish harvesting because unsafe levels of bacteria have been found.

What's causing pollution in Drayton Harbor?

There are many potential sources of pollution in the Drayton Harbor watershed, such as:

- ◆ Bypasses and possible leaks in the City of Blaine sewer system
- ◆ Marinas
- ◆ Agricultural practices in the California and Dakota Creek watersheds
- ◆ Seafood processing wastewater
- ◆ Stormwater runoff
- ◆ Wildlife

What can you do?

There are a lot of things that you as a citizen can do to make Drayton Harbor shellfish safe to eat again. And everything you do towards that end improves water quality in general and makes the community a healthier and better place to live.

- ◆ **Use mutt mitts.** Cleaning up after your pet eliminates fecal material that goes right into the harbor.
- ◆ **Keep animal waste out of creeks and the harbor.** If you own livestock, maintain buffers along riverbanks and use other nutrient management techniques.
- ◆ **Maintain your septic system.** Have your septic tank inspected every 3-5 years. Fix your system if it's not working properly.
- ◆ **Use pump-out facilities.** If you own a boat, dispose of your on-board waste properly. Don't dump in the harbor or ocean.
- ◆ **Keep wildlife wild.** Don't feed birds or seals in the harbor—large numbers of wildlife can impact water quality.
- ◆ **Volunteer.** Join a volunteer monitoring group by contacting Geoff Menzies, (360) 384-9135.
- ◆ **Find out more.** Stormwater carries many kinds of pollutants besides bacteria. Contact Whatcom County Water Resources for more information.

Whatcom County Water Resources Division
322 N. Commercial St., Suite 110
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 676-6876
waterresources@co.whatcom.wa.us



Drayton Harbor SHELLFISH

community solutions
to restore
a treasured resource



DRAYTON HARBOR SHELLFISH
PROTECTION DISTRICT

What is a Shellfish Protection District?

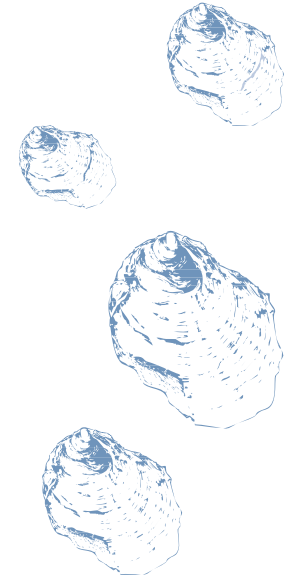
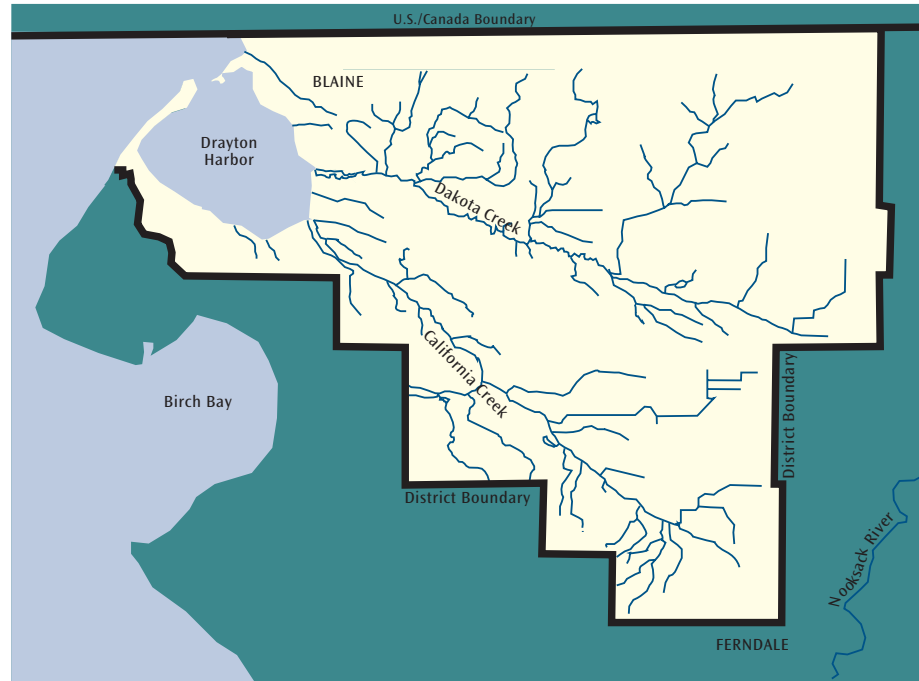
Under state law, counties with tidelands may create Shellfish Protection Districts—the areas in which nonpoint pollution threatens the water quality on which shellfish harvesting depends.

Each district must have a program to deal with nonpoint pollution, with the goal of continuing or restoring shellfish harvesting.

Why does Drayton Harbor have a Shellfish Protection District?

Because of bacterial contamination, the state Department of Health closed some of the harbor's shellfish beds in 1995, and closed the entire bay in 1999. Whatcom County created a Shellfish Protection District in 1995.

Where is the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District?



What's being done to protect Drayton Harbor shellfish?

Since the district was created, there have been many projects to identify bacteria sources in the watershed, fix existing problems, and prevent future ones. Here are just a few.



Mutt Mitts to help dog owners pick up after their pets

Dairy farm inspections and implementation of nutrient management plans



Repairs to City of Blaine sewer lines along Marine Drive

Water quality monitoring to spot pollution sources and to track success

