



**PORTAGE BAY SHELLFISH PROTECTION DISTRICT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MEETING SUMMARY

Date: July 15, 2003
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Place: 322 N. Commercial St., Bellingham – First Floor Conference Room

AGENDA

1.	6:00	Public Comment Period
2.	6:05	Review Agenda and Previous Meeting Summary
3.	6:10	Water Quality Update – Don Lennartson
4.	6:50	Northwest Washington Fair Sampling Plan
5.	7:20	Review Final Protocol for Fecal Coliform (FC) Response
6.	7:40	PIE Funding from PSAT – Hilary Culverwell
7.	7:50	New Business
8.	7:55	Next Meeting's Agenda

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Committee Members

Chris Woodward
Dorie Belisle
Bob VanWeerdhuizen
Bas Scholten

Others

Courtney Sterkel – Anvil Corporation
Ami Stillings – Whatcom County Water Resources
Andy Ross – Lummi Nation
Neal Whertzemo
Mark Henderson – Department of Ecology (DOE)
Don Lennartson – Department of Health (DOH)

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

- 7/15/03 Agenda
- 5/12/03 IFA Portage Bay Advisory Committee (AC) Meeting Summary
- First Quarter TMDL Levels for Nooksack
- Draft Protocol for FC Response, Version 3
- Flow Chart for Fecal Coliform Response Protocol
- DOH Summary of Marine Water Data for 4/11/00 to 6/30/03
- DOH Sample Site Map with Classifications

MEETING CONTENTS

1. Public Comment Period
There was no public comment.



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2. Review Agenda and Previous Meeting Summary

5/12/03 Meeting Summary

AC members reviewed the 5/12/03 IFA meeting summary with Kasey Ignac's comments incorporated.

- *Action:* Distribute the 5/12/03 summary as Final.

Meeting Agenda

AC members reviewed the agenda but did not suggest revisions.

3. Water Quality Update

Don Lennartson updated AC members on the recent water quality status for Portage Bay. Samples are measured using nation-wide standards published in the *Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish* by the National Shellfish Sanitation Program.

DOH uses four types of classifications for shellfish beds including:

- Approved – shellfish can be harvested with no restrictions
- Conditionally Approved – many are classified because of heavy rainfall, usually the beds are closed for 5 days
- Restricted – shellfish can be harvested but must be taken to a designated area to decontaminate themselves
- Prohibited – shellfish cannot be harvested at any time for any reason except by the tribes for ceremonial or subsistence conditions/purposes, there is a 50-pound limit, and tribes are cautioned about the health hazards of consuming contaminated shellfish (Consent Degree signed by local tribes and Whatcom County)

Water Quality Standards (taking the 30 most recent samples):

- A fecal coliform (FC) geometric mean not greater than 14 organisms/100 mL
- An estimated 90th percentile not greater than 43 organisms/100 mL

Don said that the geometric mean is a “forgiving” standard while the 90th percentile is an “unforgiving” standard. The 90th percentile standard is intended to identify the variability in the data set.

Don said that they are looking for these things in order to reclassify:

- Samples meet the water quality standards
- Downward patterns/trends in the data (towards lower FC counts)
- Evidence of agencies, individuals, etc who are actively involved in their watershed

DOH uses a system called systematic random sampling to collect their samples, which produces results that are unbiased to tides, water temperature, etc.

DOH has a couple of new stations (#271 and #272) that have been added to the Portage Bay sample run. DOH still does not have 30 samples collected for these sites. This forces



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the geometric mean for these sites to be an exaggerated value simply, because there are fewer values to consider for the average.

Station 48 is a prohibited area because it is located near the outfall pipe of the treatment plant and there is high contamination potential. Every marina and sewage treatment plant discharge outfall has a restricted zone around its perimeter, not because it is contaminated, but because of potential contamination from the marina sewage outfall. The closure is determined using a modeling process that takes into account tides, currents, and other factors.

Don reviewed the dataset characteristics for each of the stations. Seven (of 11) had high counts on August 18, 2002 (during the Northwest Washington fair). The unpredictability of the high FC numbers in August is an undesirable characteristic because it makes problem solving difficult.

The overall results for Portage Bay, starting in June 1999, shows the majority of samples met the standards. Even the worst stations do not exceed the standard at all times. There are just a few rare incidents similar to the August sample event in PB.

Don used Hood Canal as an example of an area that has very good water quality. Hood Canal has very low FC because there is little to no human habitation, no dairy farms, and no other possible major contaminants.

DOH would like to see Portage Bay get upgraded, but they are cautious about reclassifying too soon. They learned this lesson with Burley Creek, which DOH upgraded, but then had to downgrade 6 months later. If water quality continues to look good and the estimated 90th percentile for Stations 50 and 52 continue to decrease for the next 3 months, there is a good chance that DOH would consider the possibility of a reclassification in Portage Bay.

Don reported that this year, DOH would take their August samples during the week after the fair. Don collects samples on Tuesdays and will be contacted by the lab on Thursday afternoon if the lab detects a 90th percentile of greater than 43 organisms/100mL. Don mentioned that the timeline of the process (basically a 3-day turn-around time to get water quality results) makes it very difficult to track and identify sources.

Dorie asked Don whether PB showed similar water quality results other years during the fair. Because of the random nature of testing, there isn't enough data collected that specifically correlates to the week of the fair to be able to make that kind of assessment with any certainty.

Bob also asked for clarification on the Grays Harbor sampling procedure. He thought that during rainy events, samples were not taken. Actually, the only time that they don't collect samples is when it's unsafe due to adverse weather conditions.

Don mentioned that DOH encourages this committee's good work and action.



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He also asked for the dairy farmers' perspectives on the change of authority from DOE to Department of Agriculture (DOA) for dairy farm inspections. Bob mentioned that dairy farmers originally wanted DOA to have inspection authority because they thought communication would flow easier but clarified that dairy farmers will continue to comply.

4. Northwest Washington Fair Sampling Plan

Mark Henderson reviewed the action plan for this year's fair, which he and Andrew Craig developed and then got feedback from Don Lennartson, Kasey Ignac, Ami Stillings and Dave Ragsdale with EPA.

Mark and Andrew were interested in capturing data for more than just the fair area and propose extending the area to include sites along a couple of tributaries by the fair as well as several sites along the mainstem of the Nooksack. There will be a total of 9 sample sites, which will each be sampled twice a day. Lab costs are estimated to be approximately \$2,250.

Dave Ragsdale went to bat for the committee and found the money necessary to get the study done. DOE was disappointed that the sampling was not covered by the Whatcom County Shellfish Funds because of possible enforcement concerns. DOH originally volunteered to process 18 of these fair samples, but suggested that it would be better, if the funding allowed, to have just one laboratory analyze samples for consistency.

Several AC members suggested writing a thank you to Dave at EPA on behalf of the committee. One member also suggested submitting an article to the newspaper, informing the community on the status of PBAC: what they have done, are in the process of doing, etc.

- *Action:* Chris will write a letter to EPA, thanking them for the funding to conduct water quality samples during the time of the Northwest Washington Fair.

Mark mentioned that because the samples will be taken around two different weekends and the samples can't be processed more than 24 hours after collection, which leads to increased costs, Mark and Andrew would collect the samples.

NWIC has offered to process all 90 samples for this effort.

Chris suggested asking the Conservation District to help collect samples so Mark and Andrew don't have to collect all of them.

Don added that DOH is interested in investigating the port-a-potty owner who handles the port-a-potties during the fair. AC members assured Don that the County Health Department investigated the owner, walked his site with him to insure his system was functioning properly, etc. Everything seemed to be in order.



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5. Review Final Protocol for Fecal Coliform Response

Ami distributed a flow chart for the FC response protocol to AC members and invited any feedback. Ami mentioned that the County suggested leaving the protocol as a working document and continue to modify the document as time goes on.

Don gave Ami a secondary contact name for WDOH, Don Melvin 236-3320. Bob Woolrich is the third contact person.

Several AC members suggested revisions to the protocol, which Ami will incorporate into the final version.

6. Public Involvement and Education (PIE) Funding from PSAT

Hilary Culverwell could not attend the meeting, but Ami thought that she wanted to notify the committee about the upcoming PIE Grant Funding Process, which AC members may be interested in applying for to help with projects.

- *Action:* Ami will follow up with Hilary about more information to pass on to AC members.

7. New Business

Ami asked AC members about their interest in starting a Public Relations (PR) subcommittee, which would be responsible for developing a strategy for using education and outreach to make the community aware and to get them involved in the issues relating to shellfish and Portage Bay.

- *Action:* Ami will follow up with Scarlet Tang at Water Resources, about coordinating efforts between the AC and the WRIA 1 Public Education Efforts.

Ami suggested the subcommittee could meet on alternating months when the committee as a whole is not meeting. Several AC members mentioned the fewer meetings, the better. One AC member suggested adding public outreach as an ongoing agenda item.

Don reported that he would like to come to AC meetings, if the AC schedules the meeting around the time that he is in Bellingham.

- *Action:* Don will contact the AC with the scheduled dates that DOH will collect PB's September samples.

Chris asked whether Merle Jefferson from Lummi Nation responded to the committee's letter, sent in June 2003. One AC members suggested a follow-up call.

- *Action:* Andy Ross will follow up with Merle about the committee's letter and report back to the AC by their next meeting.



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8. Next Meeting's Agenda

AC members agreed to schedule their next meeting for 9/8/03 to discuss the following agenda items:

- PIE Outreach
- Results from Fair Sampling