

Quarterly Summary to Washington State Department of Health On-the-Ground Efforts in the Portage Bay Shellfish Protection District 3rd and 4th Quarters of 2003

Efforts continue in the Portage Bay Shellfish Protection District to effect change in the water quality over the shellfish beds and throughout the district as a whole. The following is a summarized list of activities that have occurred in the district over the third and fourth quarters of 2003.

Upgrade of Shellfish Beds (WDOH and PSAT):

- PSAT, with the Washington Department of Health, announced on October 27, 2003 the upgrading of approximately 625 acres in Portage Bay Shellfish Beds from '**restricted**' to '**approved**.' The changes were attributed to the continuing efforts of many community organizations, including local landowners and governments, Lummi Nation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Washington Department of Ecology. Citizen advisors played key roles overseeing the strategy to improve managing manure and sewage in the lower watershed and to help fit the actions into a complementary water cleanup plan administered by the Department of Ecology. Efforts will continue into the future to help sustain these improvements.

Agricultural practices (Department of Ecology and Whatcom Conservation District)

- **0-** dairy farm inspections completed
- **0-** dairy complaint investigations
- Department of Agriculture is still in the process of taking over the dairy inspection program from Department of Ecology. The three inspectors will begin work in January 2004. During the transition period of up to two years, Ecology will have the authority to enforce violations of the state's Water Quality laws, RCW 90.48
- **15-** farm plans were certified by Whatcom Conservation District in the 3rd quarter.

On-site Septic Systems (Whatcom County Health Department)

3rd Quarter

- **46-** OSS inspections performed - 30 loan inspections, 16 based on complaints
- **15-** abated, 1 in process of abatement
- **1,400** septic tank pump-out reminder cards sent to residents in the Portage Bay watershed

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4th Quarter

- **24-** OSS inspections performed – all were loan inspections, with no complaints
- **3-** abated, 1 in the process of being repaired
- **1,087** septic tank pumpout reminders were sent to property owners in the Ten Mile Creek watershed

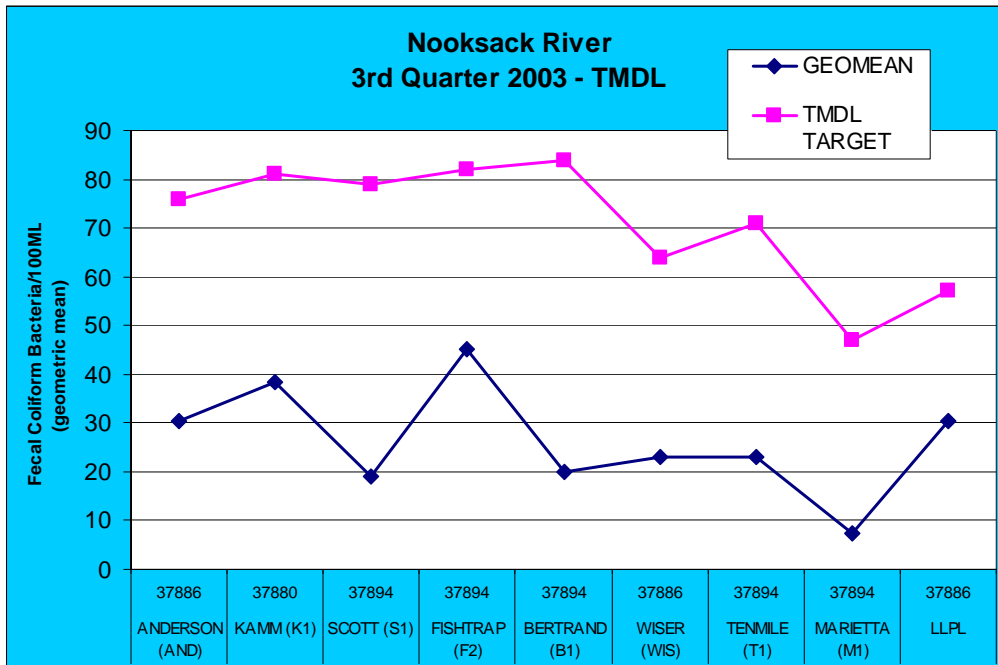
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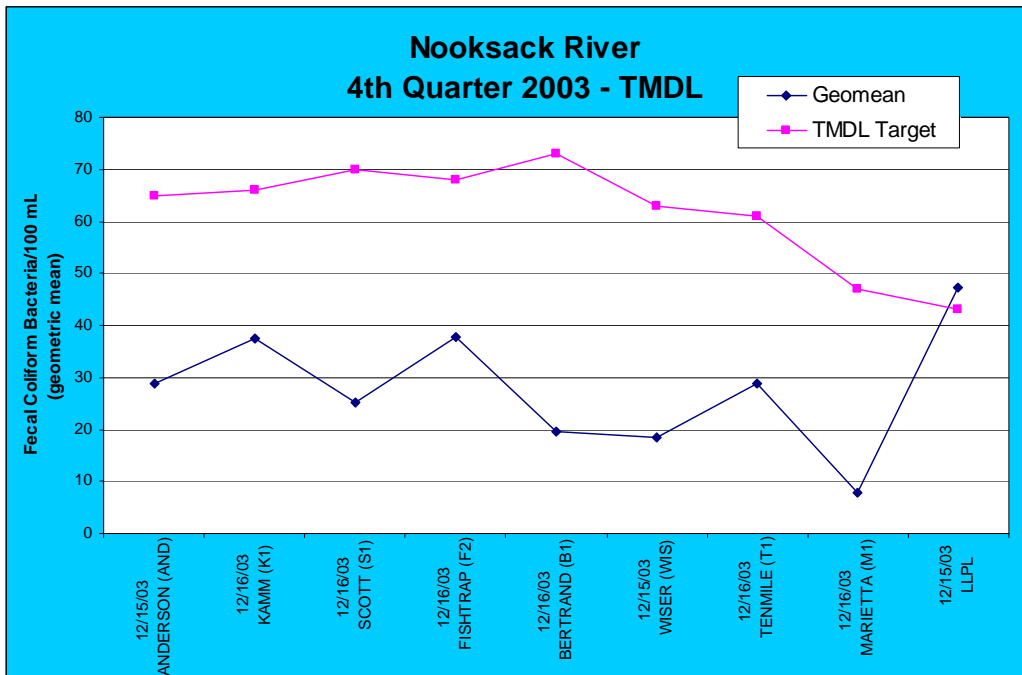
Municipal Sewer Systems (City of Lynden)

- The City of Lynden had an average fecal coliform level (geometric mean) of 3 CFU/100mL for the month of October, and an average fecal coliform level of 2 CFU/100mL for the month of November.

Water Quality Monitoring (Northwest Indian College, B. Chisholm/Stream Team)

- *Marine sites*- 3 sites- monitored bi-weekly (twice a month)
 - All three marine sites sampled by the Northwest Indian College (NWIC) are meeting the 2-part water quality standard for shellfish growing areas.
- *Freshwater sites*- 52 sites- monitored bi-weekly (twice a month)
 - Water quality in the main-stem of the Nooksack continues to be good - easily meeting the freshwater standards at all 4 sites.
 - All ten sites used for the Nooksack TMDL for fecal coliform bacteria are continuing to meet their target TMDL goals for the third quarter of 2003.
 - One site had slightly elevated level of fecal coliform bacteria in the fourth quarter of 2003.
- Except for a small area at the north end of Portage Bay, the shellfish beds are open to harvesting.





OTHER PROJECTS/EVENTS IN 2003

➤ Mutt Mitt Stations-

- Since July 2003, 72 mutt mitt packs were used, which is approximately 2.90×10^{12} (2,900,000,000,000) fecal coliform bacteria removed from the system before it could reach the waterways.

➤ Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team-

- PSAT is drafting letters for distribution to state, county and city elected officials to draw attention to the ongoing efforts of local/state/federal entities that resulted in 3 recent shellfish bed upgrades in Puget Sound. In addition to Portage Bay, these include Dyes Inlet and lower Hood Canal. PSAT will continue to send letters when reclassifications occur to draw attention to the myriad and complex issues involved with shellfish bed upgrades and planning processes. Although the region has been on a good restoration run for the past two years, ongoing efforts are needed, as

evidenced by the Department of Health's Early Warning System which recently identified 20 threatened growing areas in 12 Puget Sound counties. In Whatcom County, these threatened areas include Birch Bay and Portage Bay.

- PSAT is continuing work on a study to assess the effects of urbanization on shellfish growing areas in Puget Sound. The project is scheduled for completion by the end of March 2004. A draft literature review is out for review, and anyone interested in receiving a copy and commenting on the paper should contact Hilary Culverwell at hculverwell@psat.wa.gov or 206-721-4377.