

**WHATCOM COUNTY
Health Department**

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



Regina A. Delahunt
Director

Greg Stern, M.D.
Health Officer

October 12, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Tom Kunesh, Environmental Health Supervisor
Phone: (360) 778-6034
E-mail address: tkunesh@whatcomcounty.us

**PSP BIOTOXIN CAUSES RECREATIONAL SHELLFISH CLOSURE FOR BEACHES
IN SOUTHERN WHATCOM COUNTY**

BELLINGHAM—Unsafe levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) biotoxin have been detected in molluscan shellfish on beaches in Bellingham Bay. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has closed recreational harvest for all species of molluscan shellfish on beaches from Sandy Point south to the Skagit County line including all of Larrabee State Park.

The Whatcom County Health Department will be collecting additional samples each week to monitor biotoxin levels. We will notify the public when biotoxin levels have dropped below the closure limit.

Molluscan shellfish include clams, mussels, oysters, and scallops. Mussels usually contain the highest toxin concentration. PSP 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 be discarded. Shellfish sold in restaurants and markets have been tested before distribution and are safe to eat.

Algae that contain the toxins cannot be seen, and must be detected by laboratory testing. Therefore, always check the DOH website at <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.

###

509 Girard Street
Bellingham, WA 98225-4005
(360) 778-6000
FAX (360) 778-6001



WhatcomCountyHealth

PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER WHATCOM COUNTY
www.whatcomcounty.us/health

1500 North State Street
Bellingham, WA 98225-4551
(360) 778-6100
FAX (360) 778-6101

WhatcomCoHealth