

**WHATCOM COUNTY
Health Department**

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



Regina A. Delahunt
Director

Greg Stern, M.D.
Health Officer

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

**BIOTOXINS CAUSES RECREATIONAL SHELLFISH CLOSURE FOR ALL BEACHES
IN WHATCOM COUNTY**

BELLINGHAM—Unsafe levels of diarrhetic shellfish poisoning biotoxin have been detected in recent sampling of molluscan shellfish in Bellingham Bay. In addition, paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) biotoxin levels remain elevated in northern Whatcom County. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has closed all beaches in Whatcom County including all of Larrabee State Park and Point Roberts to recreational harvest for all species of molluscan shellfish. 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.

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



WhatcomCountyHealth

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www.whatcomcounty.us/health

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

WhatcomCoHealth