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PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

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DRAYTON HARBOR SHELLFISH RESTRICTIONS LIFTED

BLAINE— It has been over 20 years since the waters of Whatcom County’s Drayton Harbor were first closed to recreational and commercial shellfish harvest. The community could have walked away, chalking the resource loss up to the developing landscape, but instead came together to work on improving water quality. Today celebrates removal of harvest restrictions on 810 acres of recreational and commercial shellfish ground in Drayton Harbor.



Whatcom County created a Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District in 1995 to address the bay’s bacteria pollution and poor water quality. Along with the citizen advisory committee, Geoff Menzies and the Puget Sound Restoration Fund began shellfish harvest restoration efforts and involving volunteers. Stakeholders including shellfish protection district advisory committee members, shellfish harvesters, tribes, local and state agencies, non-profits, and community residents worked together and invested in finding and fixing pollution sources.

In 2004 the bay was seasonally opened and today the community can celebrate achieving an additional upgrade to 810 acres of recreational and commercial shellfish ground in Drayton Harbor.

“I have been farming oysters in Drayton Harbor since the mid-1980s and have fallen in love with the place. Today’s news is about a community which shares this appreciation and has been a willing partner in preserving this magic place for the next generation. I’m proud to be a member of this community.” said Steve Seymour, Drayton Harbor Oyster Company.

Actions taken to reduce bacteria pollution from human waste have included evaluation and repair of septic systems, consistent use of marina pump out stations, and investments in wastewater and stormwater management systems. Bacteria pollution from animal waste has been reduced through fencing farm animals out of waterways, managing manure and mud in pastures and storage areas, planting shrubs and trees along creek banks, and picking up pet waste.

Continued community participation in these and other pollution prevention actions is needed to ensure clean water to keep the shellfish beds open and local waterways safe.

“This is a prime example of how successful we can be when communities pull together to protect and improve sensitive, important resources,” said Scott Berbells, manager, Shellfish Growing Area Section. “We can all take pride in the results of that teamwork in Drayton Harbor.”

After 21 years of community hard work and dedication, we are excited to invite everyone to celebrate this historic occasion at the Drayton Harbor Oyster Company on Friday, December 16th at 4pm. Opening remarks will be followed by oysters and a social hour.

Naturally occurring biotoxin levels can change daily, so shellfish harvesters should always “Check Before You Dig” to determine if it’s safe and legal to harvest. For current beach health status and harvest seasons visit www.doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety.html. Contact Tom Kunesh from the Whatcom County Health Department at 360-778-6034 or tkunesh@whatcomcounty.us with questions regarding local shellfish harvest. Please also check for licensing and harvest season requirements at www.wdfw.wa.gov.

For more information about Drayton Harbor water quality visit the Whatcom County Public Works – Natural Resources website at: <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/1072/Water-Quality>

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