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**Recreational Shellfish Harvest Upgrade for Bellingham Bay and Chuckanut Bay
Closure Now Limited to Butter and Varnish Clams Only**

BELLINGHAM, WA — Marine biotoxin levels have dropped in some species of molluscan shellfish in Bellingham and Chuckanut Bays. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health has announced that Bellingham Bay and Chuckanut Bay, including all of Larrabee State Park, are now closed only to the harvest of butter clams and varnish clams.

Molluscan shellfish include clams, mussels, oysters and scallops. During a biotoxin event, mussels and varnish clams usually contain the highest biotoxin concentration.

When harvesting shellfish it is important to remember that:

- Biotoxins, which can cause serious illness, are not destroyed by cooking or freezing. Do not harvest or eat shellfish from closure areas.
- Biotoxin levels can change rapidly. People who harvest shellfish are advised to always check for current shellfish closures on the Washington Shellfish Safety Map (doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety) or to call the DOH Biotoxin Hotline at 1-800-562-5632 before harvesting shellfish anywhere in Washington State.

Shellfish sold in restaurants and retail markets have been tested before distribution and are safe to eat.

Algae that contain marine biotoxins cannot be seen and can only be detected by laboratory testing. The Whatcom County Health Department routinely collects shellfish samples to monitor local biotoxin levels in coordination with the Washington State Department of Health. We will notify the public when there is a change in biotoxin levels that may affect public health.

More information about safely harvesting shellfish is available from the Washington State Department of Health at www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Shellfish/RecreationalShellfish.

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