



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Biotoxin Levels Drop on Most Whatcom County Beaches**  
*Most Beaches Now Open for Shellfish Harvest*

**BELLINGHAM, WA** — Paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) biotoxin levels decreased on most Whatcom County beaches recently. Recreational shellfish harvest closures have been lifted on all beaches except Bellingham Bay, Chuckanut Bay, and Larrabee State Park.

The Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) routinely collects shellfish samples to monitor biotoxin levels. We will notify the public whenever biotoxin levels threaten shellfish safety.

Biotoxin levels can change rapidly, so shellfish harvesters are advised to always check for current shellfish closures on the Washington Shellfish Safety Map ([doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety](http://doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety)) or to call the DOH Biotoxin Hotline at 1-800-562-5632 before harvesting shellfish anywhere in Washington State.

Algae that contain marine biotoxins cannot be seen, and must be detected by laboratory testing. During a biotoxin event, mussels and varnish clams 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 always be discarded. Molluscan shellfish include clams, mussels, oysters and scallops.

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

Before harvesting, also remember to check harvest seasons and licensing requirements. Consult the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife for information about licensing and fishing regulations at [www.wdfw.wa.gov](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov).

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

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