PUGET SOUND
National Estuary Program

ISLAND COUNTY POLLUTION IDENTIFICATION & CORRECTION

Three Island County watersheds with known fecal coliform exceedances in the surface water systems that drain into shellfish growing areas of Puget Sound have been identified as a priority for Island County Public Health: Holmes Harbor, SW Whidbey/Maxwelton Valley, and Penn Cove. Shellfish harvest closures currently exist in SW Whidbey and Holmes Harbor, while a marine water station in Penn Cove has registered exceedances putting the shellfish growing area in threat of a downgrade.



What we're doing

Island County Surface Water Quality program and On-Site Septic program are working to increase water quality in these targeted watersheds by:

- Increasing number of on-site septic system inspections
- Identifying on-site septic failures
- Working with landowners to have on-site septic failures corrected
- Connecting landowners with local conservation districts on how to establish best management practices for agriculture land





How we're doing it

Island County teams will be working with local landowners to evaluate the properties' potential contribution to nonpoint source pollution that can be harmful to valuable shellfish beds in/and/or near the surrounding area. This evaluation includes dye testing to identify potential leaks in existing septic systems that may be running off into shellfish marine waters and helping landowners ensure their septic systems are fully inspected and operational.

WHY IS THIS ISSUE IMPORTANT

The Puget Sound is a vital resource to all residents in Island County. With its breathtaking views, bountiful harvest, and recreational opportunities, this beautiful region is where we've chosen to call home. A major resource is the Puget Sound's bountiful shellfish production. Washington State is a major producer of commercial mussels, clams, and oysters in the US, and recreational shellfish harvesting is a historical tradition in Island County. Holmes Harbor, SW Whidbey/Maxwelton Valley, and Penn Cove comprise approximately 2,799 acres of commercial shellfish growing area. Our actions directly affect the water quality in the Puget Sound region and have an impact to our quality of life in Island County. The choices we make at home run into the streams, ditches and end in the marine waters. To keep everyone happy and healthy in Island County it is our responsibility to show up for our neighbors and take can of the region we call home.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

The 2013 WDOH shoreline survey of the growing area found that approximately 70% of the on-site sewage systems serving the shoreline properties in the growing area were gravity-fed systems over 30 years old. If systems are failing, streams and stormwater runoff carry biological contamination directly into the Puget Sound, polluting our community's shared resources. You can help support our efforts by keeping your on-site septic systems inspected and complete requested maintenance by a licensed provider. Some additional tips to help reduce your impact:

Solid Waste

- Sweep up debris from sidewalks and driveways
- Report chemical spills to the local hazardous waste cleanup team.

Stormwater

- Divert stormwater to a swale
- Construct a raingarden
- Add rain barrels
- Use permeable pavement

Pet waste

- Remember to pick up your pet's waste and dispose of it properly.
- The average dog produces 3/4 lb. of poop a day!
- The National Institute of Health estimates that one gram of dog waste contains approximately 31 million fecal coliform (bacteria).

ABOUT

Island County Public Health is dedicated to supporting and serving communities on Whidbey and Camano Islands. Island County initiated a pilot Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program from 2011-2015 with support from the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) using Pathogens Lead Organization funds. Through targeted efforts surface water quality improvements were made sufficiently to allow for 152 acres of the Port Susan Growing Area to be classified as approved for shellfish harvesting. In 2018 we were awarded additional support using DOH Shellfish Strategic Initiative funds. We are hoping to build off of our successful pilot program to re-open and further



FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.islandcountywa.gov

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