

# The Washington State Department of Health

# Shellfish Position Requirements

## Tribally-signed Shellfish Consent Decree – Update to Position Descriptions Due to Legislation

## Consent Decree and Settlement Agreement



The [1994 Shellfish Consent Decree](#) established a Settlement Agreement signed by 19 Shellfish Treaty Tribes, the State of Washington, and the United States Department of Justice. The Agreement outlines public health requirements for commercial shellfish harvest. It also establishes a cooperative system for monitoring, enforcement, and dispute resolution. This Agreement is crucial for addressing public health concerns related to shellfish harvest. It is especially relevant in areas where treaty rights are exercised.

The Agreement includes required minimum qualifications for staff involved in shellfish facility inspections, water quality studies, and shoreline surveys. These requirements include degrees.

## SHB 2216

[Substitute House Bill 2216](#) was signed into law following the 2024 Legislative Session. The bill requires "*reducing barriers to state employment by eliminating two-year and four-year degree requirements that are unnecessary.*" The bill's requirements conflict with the position requirements in the Settlement Agreement. The Department of Health (DOH) cannot comply with both as they are currently written.

## Degree Requirements

Attachments F, G, and H of the Settlement Agreement outline minimum qualifications for Standardized Shellfish Inspectors, Water Quality Studies, and Shoreline Surveys. These include degree requirements.

To comply with the new law, DOH is requesting your collaboration to update the impacted position descriptions. Based on SHB 2216, we will be reducing barriers by adding non-degree qualification options.



## Next Steps

We want to resolve the conflict between requirements by updating the relevant attachments in the Settlement Agreement. We want to work together with the signatory Tribes to evaluate how the new law relates to the Settlement Agreement, with the goal of developing mutually agreed upon updates to the Agreement attachments.

Any changes would need to be signed and filed with the court.

We first provided notice in an [informative letter](#) issued on May 14, 2025. The follow up collaborative letter provides details about a meeting opportunity in August.

Non-degree options can include things like:

- Work experience in a similar role.
- Transferable skills.
- Internships.
- Volunteer experience.
- Professional skills or certifications.
- Trainings.
- Experience related to small business ownership.

## Contacts

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