

Shellfish Harvesting

Open shellfish harvesting areas are an indicator of good water quality. Washington State monitors marine water quality at more than 1,700 marine water sampling sites and evaluates potential pollution sources along shorelines to assure safe shellfish for the consumer. While mandatory for commercially harvested shellfish, stringent water quality requirements also assure public health is protected for other water recreation uses.

DOH works with local, state, federal, tribal and nongovernmental organizations to identify and mitigate pollution that leads to unsafe marine environments, food and recreation. These efforts protect public health, result in a cleaner Puget Sound, and increase access to beaches for recreational and commercial shellfish harvesting.



4,803

Washington commercial shellfish harvesting acres have had net improvement since 2007



Stringent water quality requirements assure safe shellfish and protect public health for other water recreation

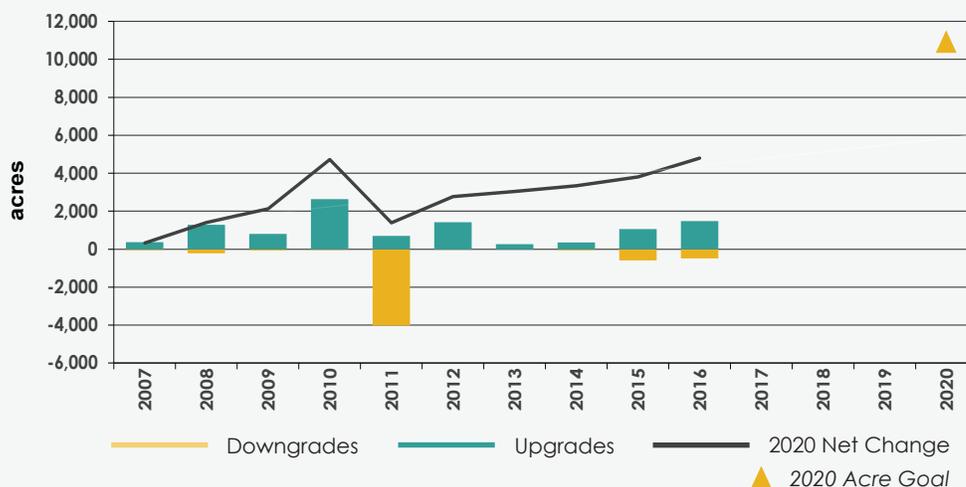
Harvestable Shellfish Acreage = Safer Puget Sound

- DOH collects and evaluates marine water quality, inspects potential shoreline pollution sources, and manages the classification (i.e., Approved, Conditionally Approved, Restricted, or Prohibited) of more than 200,000 acres in Puget Sound. The program depends on the success of local, state, federal and tribal agencies to identify and correct pollution problems.
- In 2007, DOH adopted a stretch-goal of a net 10,000-acre improvement (e.g., approved or with fewer restrictions) for Puget Sound shellfish harvesting areas by 2020. Other state and federal agencies and the Governor's Office subsequently adopted similar stretch-goals. An increase in the number of harvestable acres indicates the correction of pollution sources, increased shellfish harvesting opportunities, and the protection of public health.
- Since 2007, DOH has seen a net improvement to 4,803 harvestable shellfish acres (through 2016), with positive gains each year. An exception was in 2011 when 4,000 acres of the Samish Bay Shellfish Growing Area were downgraded. During the same time period, DOH made 83 shellfish growing area classification changes (e.g., shellfish bed upgrades, downgrades); approximately 75% of which were due to improved marine water quality.

Commercial Shellfish Harvesting

- The improvement and decline of water quality in shellfish harvesting areas is used as a measure of the health of Puget Sound.
- Between 2007 and 2016, there was a net improvement to 4,803 commercial shellfish harvesting acres.
- There was a steady increase in acreage available for harvesting since 2011.

**Change to Shellfish Harvesting Areas
Washington State, Puget Sound Area
DOH Shellfish Program, 2007-2016**



Overcoming Barriers

To be successful, DOH and its partners must overcome the barriers to maintaining safe marine water. Engagement of stakeholders, development of actions, and implementation of projects ensure this success.

Actions needed to overcome barriers include:

- Implement practices that eliminate polluted runoff from agricultural activities.
- Create effective and sustainable pollution identification and correction programs.
- Develop and implement onsite sewage system management plans.
- Effectively manage waste from boaters.
- Develop a wastewater treatment plant outfall strategy for Puget Sound.

How is Washington addressing Puget Sound water quality?

DOH continues to work with its partners to identify and mitigate pollution sources around recreational and commercial shellfish harvesting areas. DOH partnership actions include:

- Participating in stakeholder groups aimed at the development of partnerships and the implementation of projects related to non-point pollution correction and prevention, including but not limited to:
 - [Results Washington, Goal 3](#), Goal Council.
 - Results Washington, Shellfish Coordination Group.
 - Department of Agriculture's Dairy Nutrient Advisory Committee.
 - Clean Samish Initiative, Executive Committee.
- Investing Environmental Protection Agency, National Estuary Program funds in Puget Sound projects to further pollution identification and correction (PIC) programs, managing onsite sewage systems, implementing agricultural best management practices (BMPs), and controlling boaters' waste.
- Engaging local governments, state agencies, and tribes in coordinated projects that improve marine water quality.
- Whatcom Clean Water Program.
- Puget Sound-wide Shellfish Protection Districts.

Technical Notes

Classification Options: Approved – Open, except during emergency conditions. Conditionally Approved – Open, except during predictable conditions that cause higher bacteria levels in the marine water (rainfall, season, river flow related temporary closures). Restricted – Closed to direct harvest. Shellfish must be moved to an Approved or Conditionally Approved area and allowed to purge before harvest. Prohibited – Closed.