Recreational Shellfish Harvesting
In Pacific County

- Littleneck Clam: Silliqua patula
- Pacific Oyster: Cancer magister
- Dungeness Crab: Clinocardium nuttallii
- Manila Clam: Tapes philippinarum
- Razor Clam
**INTRODUCTION**

This booklet was prepared through a combined effort of the Pacific County Department of Community Development, Washington State Department of Natural Resources and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Its purpose is to provide general information regarding the location of public beaches, access to these beaches, shellfish available and potential public health problems associated with shellfish.

Unfortunately, the authors cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information contained within this booklet due to changes in water quality, land ownership and shellfish populations. Be sure to adhere to the information contained within this booklet regarding private tideland ownership, trespassing and access.

Remember, before you harvest shellfish in Washington State:

- You must buy a Washington State shellfish license and wear that license while you are harvesting.
- You must check the rules and regulations regarding the seasons, size limits and harvest limits of the shellfish you are harvesting. You may obtain a Fishing in Washington booklet from the Department of Fish & Wildlife or your nearest license dealer.
- You should call the Marine Biotoxin Hotline (1-800-562-5632) before you dig to find out if there are any beach closures in the area.
- You must respect the public and private beaches in Pacific County.

We hope you enjoy this booklet and find it useful.

**TIDELAND OWNERSHIP**

The shores of navigable tidal waters, lying between the line of ordinary high tide and the line of extreme low tide, are considered tidelands. Many of the tidelands in Willapa Bay are privately owned. Every effort has been made to verify public tideland locations on these maps; however, we are not responsible for errors. Tideland users should first verify property boundaries. The absence of posted signs does not automatically identify public tidelands. Shellfish may not be taken from private tidelands without the owner’s permission.

**HISTORY OF PUBLIC TIDELANDS**

When the original 13 colonies became states, the founding fathers adopted land use laws based on the English system of law. The shores of navigable waters and the soils under them were the property of the state. New states, upon admission to the union, retained the same rights as the original 13 colonies.

The State of Washington, at the time of adoption of the State Constitution on November 11, 1889, asserted its ownership of the beds...
and shores of navigable waters up to and including the line of ordinary high water (mean high water).

At that time all the tidelands of the state were publicly owned. However, the Washington State Constitution does not contain a provision allowing upland property owners any rights of access to saltwater for shipping, fish and shellfish propagation or other water-oriented industry. Washington is a non-riparian rights state.

To rectify this situation, and provide revenue to the state, the 1889-1890 Legislature authorized the sale of public tidelands to private individuals. In the ensuing years, approximately 60 percent of Washington State-owned tidelands were sold to private owners. This practice was discontinued in 1969.

**Management of Public Lands**

Today, 1,700 miles of saltwater tidelands remain in state ownership. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife manage some 300 miles of tidelands, including the Pacific coastal tidelands. The remaining 1,400 miles of tidelands are managed by Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

The DNR manages these public trust lands by utilizing multiple use concepts. These lands are held in trust for all the people. However, it must be recognized that some uses such as aquaculture and recreation are not equally compatible. Therefore, DNR has inventoried the state-owned tidelands and classified them as being best suited for commercial use (open for lease), reserves, and for public use purposes. Approximately 75 percent of the Department managed tidelands were classified for public use. The decisions were based on location, historic use, length, and type of tidelands, and the extent and type of upland development.

**Public Ownership**

The extent of public ownership on any particular piece of state-owned tideland varies depending upon the date the uplands were patented, i.e., transferred from government to private ownership.

For tidelands where the uplands were patented prior to statehood (November 11, 1889), the private upland ownership extends to the mean high water line or to the meander line, whichever is further seaward. Uplands patented by the United States after November 11, 1889 extend to the line of mean high water.

The meander line is the original surveyed shoreline, and in instances where erosion has occurred since 1889, it may be well out into the Bay. This means that what looks like tidelands, could actually be privately owned uplands.

Mean high water is the average of the elevations reached by all of the high tides for a particular area over a long period of time. A complete cycle of high tides takes 18.6 years. Mean high water in Willapa Bay varies from 5.06 feet to 10.53 feet in elevation. In most cases, the mean high water line falls just seaward of
the line of old drift logs in the upper tideland area.

Since the meander line is a surveyed line rather than a constant elevation line, in areas where pre-statehood patents exist for uplands it may be very difficult to determine the exact location of the boundary between public tidelands and private uplands. Additionally, naturally occurring erosion and accretion make upland boundary lines subject to constant change.

After statehood, numerous detached tideland tracts in Willapa Bay were sold for the purposes of shellfish cultivation. These privately owned detached shellfish beds are usually located some distance away from the shoreline; however, in some cases they are very close. Most commercial shellfish beds are marked with hemlock stakes or other markers by the property owner.

Rights and Responsibilities of Public Users

Certain rules of conduct should be followed when visiting public tidelands to dispel the image of the tourist who trespasses and leaves litter. Make sure to park in safe and appropriate locations and do not trespass across private uplands when accessing public tidelands.

Shellfish growing is a viable industry in Willapa Bay and is very important to the economy of Pacific County. Shellfish growers farm their private tideland beds for commercial purposes. Be careful not to encroach onto private shellfish bed(s).

Users of state-owned tidelands assume all liability and risk associated with their use.

Often there is no upland property available to install sanitary or garbage facilities. Use sanitary facilities available at nearby marinas and parks, or carry a toilet on board. The continued recreational and commercial harvest of shellfish in Willapa Bay relies on clean water.

Do not trespass upon other people’s property to access public tidelands.

Public Health

Vibrio paraheamolyticus

The ingestion of shellfish contaminated with Vibrio paraheamolyticus can result in intestinal disorders, which may include watery diarrhea and abdominal cramps, some cases may also include nausea, vomiting, fever and headache. The typical incubation period (contaminated shellfish consumption to disease outbreak) is between 12 and 24 hours, however, this period can range from 4 hours up to 30 hours. Typically the disease lasts between one and seven days and cannot be transmitted from person to person.

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP)

PSP, commonly referred to as “red tide” can be associated with massive algae blooms that can cause a discoloration of the water. It is important to realize, however, PSP may be present when a discoloration of the water (red tide)
is not. Individuals should always check the marine biotoxin hotline for up to date information regarding shellfish closures.

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning is an illness caused by the ingestion of shellfish containing concentrated amounts of toxin. Symptoms of the disease include tingling of the lips and tongue, drowsiness, fever, rash and staggering. The duration of the illness is typically a few days in non-lethal cases, however, the most severe cases can result in respiratory arrest within 24 hours of the consumption of toxic shellfish.

**Domoic Acid**

According to the booklet titled Puget Sound Public Shellfish Sites, domoic acid (or Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning, ASP) is thought to be caused by microscopic marine diatom. Domoic Acid Poisoning is often referred to as Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning (ASP) and is the result of eating fish or shellfish containing concentrated amounts of the toxin.

Initial symptoms of ASP include vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and abdominal cramps within the first 24 hours after eating contaminated shellfish. In severe cases, headache, dizziness, confusion, disorientation, loss of short-term memory, motor weakness, seizures, profuse respiratory secretions, cardiac arrhythmia, coma and possibly death can develop within 48 hours after ingestion.

Outbreaks of PSP, ASP and *Vibrio paraheamolyticus* are sporadic and typically occur during warmer water temperatures. Blooms can occur rapidly and without warning. Individuals should always call the Marine Biotoxin Hotline before they dig. If the above-mentioned signs and symptoms develop after the consumption of shellfish, medical attention should immediately be sought.

**Contaminant Impacts**

During the past fifteen years, more than 25% of Washington’s shellfish growing areas have been closed to harvest due to inadequate control of pollution sources. These pollutants can become incorporated within the shellfish through their natural “filter feeding” mechanism. In turn, the contamination can be transmitted to humans through the consumption of raw or undercooked shellfish.

The Washington State Department of Health inspects, samples and certifies the commercial and recreational shellfish areas within Willapa Bay, an area that commonly produces over one-half of all the oysters in Washington State. Growing areas are commonly placed into one of the following four categories: APPROVED (disease causing organisms not present in the area in dangerous concentrations), CONDITIONALLY APPROVED (area subject to intermittent, predictable contamination), RESTRICTED (area where contamination is low enough to allow the relaying of shellfish to an approved area to assure the shellfish is safe for consumption), and PROHIBITED (contamination may reach the area in excessive concentrations).
In 1989, the Washington State Department of Health officially downgraded the commercial shellfish beds located east of the Bay Center peninsula from an approved to a prohibited status. Routine water samples taken from the area revealed an excessive number of coliform bacteria. Source identification work identified three potential sources of bacterial contamination: failing commercial and residential on-site sewage systems, agricultural runoff and watershed runoff. Through the efforts of local and state government and the residents of Bay Center, 32 failing on-site sewage systems were repaired and a large portion of the prohibited area was upgraded to conditionally approved. The Bay Center reclassification was the first non-point pollution shellfish growing area upgrade in Washington State history.

From 1990 through 1994 there were a total of 31 cases of shellfish borne disease from shellfish harvested in Pacific County.

*Vibrio parahaemolyticus* was identified as the disease-causing agent in four of the thirty-one cases.

In 1991 domoic acid was detected in razor clams from the Pacific Ocean beaches of the Long Beach peninsula. This detection resulted in an immediate closure that effectively canceled the razor clam season. Again in 1997, domoic acid was detected along the Twin Harbors beaches in Northern Pacific County, a temporary closure of these beaches resulted. More than 20 people were affected in 1991 as a result of the domoic acid poisoning. The Washington State Department of Health estimates that in 1995 104,000 “digger trips” were made to Pacific County to harvest razor clams.

In 1992 and 1997 extremely high levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) was found in razor clams along the Pacific Ocean beaches of the Long Beach peninsula. Willapa Bay was closed as a precautionary measure.

**Common Shellfish**

The history and type of shellfish resources available in Pacific County are closely tied to the commercial shellfish industry. As noted above, much of the tidelands were sold to and are currently being farmed by private shellfish growers. The small native oyster (*Ostreola conchaphila*) was
harvested beginning in the mid 1800’s. Native oysters can still be found, but are no longer abundant due to overharvest and extreme environmental conditions around 1900. They have been replaced by the Japanese or Pacific oyster (Crassostrea gigas), which was introduced in 1928, and is now the dominant commercial and recreational species. Oysters are common at the Nahcotta tidelands site and around Pinnacle Rock on the southwest side of Long Island. They may wash up at times and can be taken at the other beaches as well.

The Japanese littleneck clam, or Manila clam (Tapes philippinarum) was introduced with the Pacific oyster and is now the dominant commercial and recreational species of intertidal clam. This clam is available on most of the beaches listed.

The eastern softshell clam (Mya arenaria) was also likely introduced from the east coast of North America, where it is very important in recreational and commercial catches. It is less sought after here, but abundant at some locations.

The cockle (Clinocardium nuttalli) is a native clam often used in chowder. It is generally not abundant in Willapa Bay, but found in open sandy locations.

Several other Pacific Northwest clam species including the horse or gaper clam (Tresus nuttalli), the native littleneck clam (Protothaca staminea) and the butter clam (Saxidomus giganteus) may occasionally be found, but are not common in Willapa Bay.

Willapa Bay is a nursery area for juvenile Dungeness crab (Cancer magister). Recreational catches often include many undersized juveniles which must be returned, however larger crab are taken both from piers at Tokeland and Nahcotta and from boats in the deeper channels.

Finally, razor clams (Siliqua patula) are abundant on the beaches along the open coast. They were fished commercially through 1968, but this fishery is now restricted to detached spits in Willapa Bay. The recreational fishery is seasonal and very popular. Seasons are usually well announced and shellfish harvesters are advised to check with local Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife offices before planning their trip to the beach.

Details on the history of Willapa Bay and its bountiful shellfish harvest can be found at the Willapa Bay Interpretive Site at the Port of Peninsula in Nahcotta, the Nahcotta Tidelands Interpretive Site and the Pacific County Museum in South Bend.
**MANILA CLAM**  
*Tapes philippinarum*  
Size: 1-2”, up to 2.5”  
Oblong shell with concentric and radiating lines.

**PACIFIC OYSTER**  
*Crassostrea gigas*  
Irregular, chalky-white shell. Often found in groups attached to one another or a solid object.

**COCKLE CLAM**  
*Clinocardium nuttallii*  
Size: up to 5”  
Prominent, evenly spaced ridges, which fan out from the hinge. Mottled, light brown.

**PACIFIC RAZOR CLAM**  
*Siliqua patula*  
Size: grows to 6”  
Fragile, thin, elongated shell covered with shiny, tan “skin”.

**DUNGENESS CRAB**  
*Cancer magister*  
White-tipped claws, brownish shell.

**EASTERN SOFTSHELL CLAM**  
*Mya arenaria*  
Size: grows to 6”  
Soft, chalky-white shells with rough irregular surface.
PUBLIC BEACHES

1. North Cove/Grayland

Access: There are two public access points to the beaches in this area. Both sites allow vehicular access.

Parking: Parking is available on the beach.

Camping: There is no public camping allowed at these sites.

Sanitary Facilities: Restrooms are available at the beach approach.

Shellfish: Razor clam.

Warrenton Cannery Approach

Location: Warrenton Cannery Road, milepost 22.3 on highway 105.

Midway Beach Approach

Location: Midway Beach Road, milepost 23.9 on Highway 105.

2. Tokeland Marina

Access: The Tokeland Marina may be accessed by boat or by land from Front Lane.

Driving Directions: From Raymond, follow SR105 north to Tokeland Road (milepost 18.6). Turn left on Tokeland Road, which becomes Kindred Avenue, and follow to Front Lane. Turn left on Front Lane.

Parking: Public parking is available at the site and also across Front Lane.

Camping: There is no camping allowed at this site. However, there are privately owned camping areas available in the Tokeland area.

Sanitary Facilities: Sanitary facilities are available on-site.

Nearest Boat Launch: On-site

Shellfish: Dungeness crab
3. **Hawk's Point/Tokeland Area**

Location: Second class tidelands lying in front of, adjacent to, or abutting upon Section 5 and Government Lots 4, 5, and 6, Section 4, Township 14 North, Range 10 West, W.M.; lying northerly of privately owned tideland tracts. The eastern boundary of this public tideland area starts along State Route 105 near Freshwater Creek and continues to the west approximately 2 miles.

Public tideland boundaries: Some uplands in this area have pre-statehood patents, which means that the upland property line(s) end at mean high water or the meander line, whichever is further seaward. Some erosion has occurred along this stretch of shoreline. It is likely that some privately owned uplands now have tideland characteristics, and what may look like public tidelands is actually privately owned land. Also, there are privately owned detached tidelands located between approximately 500-1,500 feet seaward from the meander line.

Access: The Hawk's Point/Tokeland site may be accessed by boat or by land along State Route 105.

Driving Directions: From Raymond, follow SR105 north towards Tokeland to Freshwater Creek (at milepost 13.3).

Parking: There are three gravel pullouts on the north side of Highway 105 between milepost 13 and 15.

Camping: There is no camping allowed at this site.

Sanitary Facilities: There are no restroom or garbage facilities at or near this site.

Nearest Boat Launch: Tokeland Marina or Smith Creek

Shellfish: Manila clam, cockle, Eastern softshell, Pacific oyster

4. **Rhodesia Beach**

Access:}

Driving Directions:}

Parking:}

Camping:}

Sanitary Facilities:}

Nearest Boat Launch:}

Shellfish:
Location: Second class tidelands lying in front, adjacent to, or abutting upon Government Lots 2, 3, 4, and 5, Section 17, Township 13 North, Range 10 West, W.M., lying easterly of privately owned tideland tracts. The southern boundary of this public tideland area is near an area commonly referred to as “Buggy Basin” and continues north approximately one mile.

Public tideland boundaries:
All uplands in this area have pre-statehood patents, which means that the upland property line(s) end at mean high water or the meander line, whichever is further seaward. Some erosion has occurred along this stretch of shoreline. It is likely that some privately owned uplands now have tideland characteristics, and what may look like public tidelands is actually privately owned land. Also, there are privately owned detached tidelands located between approximately 300-450 feet seaward from the meander line.

Access: Rhodesia Beach may be accessed by boat or by land from two locations: 1) from Bay Center Road near “Buggy Basin”; and 2) the county road known as Rhodesia Beach Drive.

Driving Directions: 1) From Raymond/South Bend, take US 101 South towards Long Beach; right on Bay Center Road (at milepost 41.5); go 1½ miles to turnout on west side of the county road for access near Buggy Basin; and 2) continue north on Bay Center Road approximately ½ mile; left on Rhodesia Beach Drive to beach.

Parking: 1) The turnout on west side of Bay Center Road near Buggy Basin; and 2) along shoulder of Rhodesia Beach Drive.

Camping: There is no camping allowed at this site; however, there is a KOA campground located approximately ½ mile north of Rhodesia Beach Drive on Bay Center Road.

Sanitary Facilities: There are no restroom or garbage facilities at or near this site.

Nearest Boat Launch: Palix River or Bay Center

Shellfish: Manila clam, cockle, Eastern softshell, Pacific oyster

5. Nemah
Location: Second class tidelands lying in front of, adjacent to, or abutting upon Government Lots 5, 6, and 7, Section 3, and Government Lots 1, 2, and 3, Section 4, Township 12 North, Range 10 West, W.M.; Government Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, Section 34, Section 27, and Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, Section 28, Township 13 North, Range 10 West, W.M. lying easterly of the Nemah Oyster Reserve and easterly of privately owned tideland tracts. The southern boundary of this public tideland area starts near Pickernell Creek and continues to the north approximately 3½ miles.

Public tideland boundaries: From mean high water out to the east boundary of private tideland tracts and the Nemah Oyster Reserve. Some private tideland boundaries fall very close to the shoreline, especially near the southern boundary of these public tidelands. In this area the adjacent landowner has marked their privately owned shellfish bed with white plastic stakes.

Access: The Nemah site may be accessed by boat or by land at Pickernell Creek off Highway 101.

Driving Directions: From Raymond/South Bend, follow US 101 south towards Long Beach to Pickernell Creek (at milepost 38.3).

Parking: There is a gravel turnout on the west side of Highway 101 just south of Pickernell Creek.

Camping: There is no camping allowed at this site.

Sanitary Facilities: There are no restroom or garbage facilities at or near this site.

Nearest Boat Launch: Palix River or Bay Center

Shellfish: Manila clam, cockle, Eastern softshell, Pacific oyster

6. & 7. Long Island

Access: Long Island may be accessed by boat only.

Camping: Camping is permitted on Long Island. There are five campgrounds containing a total of 24 campsites. Call the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge to inquire about campsite availability just prior to your trip.

Sanitary Facilities: Vault toilets are available at each campground. A public restroom is also located across the highway from the Refuge boat launch.

Nearest Boat Launch: Willapa Bay Wildlife Refuge or Port of Peninsula

Shellfish: Manila clam, some Pacific oyster
Diamond Point

Location: Northwest tip of Long Island. From mean high water out to the eastern boundary of the Long Island Oyster Reserve. Harvest is allowed west on reserve tidelands to mean lower low water between reserve monuments 39, 40 and 41.

Pinnacle Rock

Location: Southwest side of Long Island. From mean high water out to the eastern boundary of Long Island Oyster Reserve and privately owned tideland tracts which are posted. Harvest is allowed west on reserve tidelands to mean lower low water between reserve monuments 58 and 59 in the vicinity of Pinnacle Rock.
8. Nahcotta Tidelands

Location: East of the Nahcotta Tidelands Interpretive site and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife Willapa Bay Field Station. The site contains 40 acres of intertidal land and is composed of a sand/mud mixture with no gravel present.

Access: The Nahcotta Tidelands may be accessed by land via the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Nahcotta Tidelands Interpretive Site.

Driving Directions: Follow Sandridge Road North to the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Nahcotta Tidelands Interpretive Site in Nahcotta.

Parking: Public parking is available at the Interpretive Site.

Camping: There is no camping allowed at this site.

Sanitary Facilities: Sanitary facilities are available at the interpretive site.

Nearest Boat Launch: Port of Peninsula

Shellfish: Pacific oyster, Manila clam.

9. Port of Peninsula

Location: Port of Peninsula may be accessed via 275th Street, in Nahcotta.

Parking: Public parking is available on-site.

Camping: There is no public camping allowed at this site.

Sanitary Facilities: Restrooms are available. Summer months, open daily, winter months, open Monday through Friday.

Nearest Boat Launch: On-site.

Shellfish: Dungeness crab.
10. Long Beach Peninsula

Access: There are several public, maintained access points to the beach along the peninsula. Vehicular access to the beach is permitted at the sites, unless otherwise noted.

Parking: Parking is permitted on the beach where access is available.

Camping: There is no public camping allowed at these sites, unless otherwise noted.

Sanitary Facilities: Restroom facilities are available at all sites.

Shellfish: Razor clam

Fort Canby State Park

Access: On the South end of the state park there is public access through the gate along the North jetty. The gate closes at dusk.

Parking: Public parking is available on-site.

Camping: Camping is available on-site at the state park.

Beards Hollow

Location: Highway 100, Ilwaco.

Access: The beach may be accessed via a trail.

Parking: Public parking is available on-site.

Seaview Beach Approach

Location: 38th Place, Seaview.

10th Avenue Approach, Long Beach

Location: 10th Avenue, South, Long Beach.

1st Street Approach, Long Beach

Location: 1st Street, Long Beach.

Cranberry Road Approach

Location: Cranberry Road

Klipsan Beach Approach

Location: 225th Street.

Ocean Park Beach Approach

Location: Bay Avenue, Ocean Park.
**Oysterville Beach Approach**

Location: Oysterville Road

Note: There is a ¼ mile reserve area located approximately 2.8 miles north of the Oysterville Beach Approach. Shellfish harvesting in this area is prohibited.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Additional information regarding the recreational harvest of shellfish in Pacific County can be obtained from the following locations.

**Harvesting**

Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

Region 6 Headquarters
(360) 249-4628

Willapa Bay Field Station
(360) 665-4166

**Rule Changes**

Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
(360) 796-3215

**Public Health**

Marine Biotoxin Hotline
1-800-562-5632

Pacific County Department of Community Development
(360) 875-9356
(360) 642-9356

**Tideland Ownership**

Washington State Department of Natural Resources
(360) 748-2383

This booklet was prepared through a combined effort of:

- Pacific County Department of Community Development
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington State Department of Health

Funding for this booklet provided by:

-December 1999-