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News Release

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Bainbridge Island's Eastern Shoreline Closed to Shellfish Harvesting

BREMERTON, WA – Marine biotoxins that cause paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) – also known as 'red tide' – have been detected in high levels in shellfish samples from Blakely Harbor on Bainbridge Island. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health and the Health District have closed the east side of Bainbridge Island, Blake Island, and all bays and inlets within this area. The closure is for all species of clams, oysters, and mussels.

Samples of oysters collected on Tuesday September 30, 2008, from Blakely Harbor contained PSP toxin concentrations of 93 micrograms per 100 grams of shellfish tissue. Beaches are closed when the toxin level exceeds 80 micrograms per 100 grams of tissue.

Miller Bay and Port Madison Bay are under an existing PSP closure from Agate Passage to Point Jefferson including the northern shoreline of Bainbridge Island to Point Monroe. The closure is for all species of clams, oysters, and mussels.

The remaining areas of the eastern side of Kitsap County are also still under an existing PSP closure for Butter Clams only, including all public and private beaches, from Point No Point south to Point White, except for Dyes Inlet, Sinclair Inlet, Liberty Bay, Rich Passage, Yukon Harbor, and from Point Southworth to the Southern County Line which are open to all species. Warning signs have been posted at public beaches alerting people not to collect shellfish from the closure areas.

Shrimp and crab are not included in this closure, but crabs should be cleaned prior to cooking, and the "crab butter" should be discarded. Shellfish harvested commercially that are available in stores and restaurants are tested for toxin prior to distribution, and are safe to eat.

Marine biotoxins are not destroyed by cooking or freezing and can be life-threatening. People can become ill from eating shellfish contaminated with the naturally occurring marine algae that contains toxins that are harmful to humans. Symptoms of PSP can appear within minutes or hours and usually begin with tingling lips and tongue, moving to the hands and feet, followed by difficulty breathing and potentially death. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should contact a health care provider. For extreme reactions, call 911.

In most cases, the algae that contain the toxins cannot be seen and must be detected using laboratory testing. The Health District will continue to monitor shellfish at Kitsap County beaches, and notify the public if the levels of PSP toxin become unsafe in other areas.

For current shellfish closures within Kitsap County, call our hotline number at 1-800-2BE-WELL, or visit us online at www.kitsapcountyhealth.com. For closures in other areas of Washington, call the Washington State Department of Health’s Red Tide Hotline at 1-800-562-5632, or visit them online at www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/biotoxin.htm.

This notice supersedes previous PSP notices.

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