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News Release

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Shellfish Harvesting Closure Area Expanded in North Kitsap County

BREMERTON — Marine biotoxins that cause paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) — also known as ‘red tide’ — have been detected in high levels in shellfish samples from the Kingston Marina. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health and the Health District have closed recreational shellfish harvesting in an area from Point-No-Point south to Point Jefferson, expanding a previous closure area in north Kitsap County. The closure is for all species of clams, oysters, and mussels.

Samples of mussels collected in Kingston on Monday, October 20, 2008, contained toxin concentrations of 82 micrograms per 100 grams of shellfish tissue. Beaches are closed when the toxin level exceeds 80 micrograms per 100 grams of tissue.

An existing “all species” closure remains in effect on the eastern shoreline of Kitsap County from Point Jefferson south to the Kitsap/Pierce County line. Areas within the closure area include Port Madison Bay, Miller Bay, Agate Passage, Blake Island, Manchester, Yukon Harbor, and the eastern shoreline of Bainbridge Island, including all bays and inlets. The closure is for all species of clams, oysters, and mussels.

The remaining areas of the eastern side of Kitsap County are still under an existing PSP closure for Butter Clams only. This includes the areas from Point Bolin south to Point White. The areas not included in these PSP closures are Dyes Inlet, Sinclair Inlet, Liberty Bay, and Rich Passage. Warning signs have been posted at public beaches alerting people not to collect shellfish from closed 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: 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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