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Media Release

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Shellfish Harvesting Closure in Port Orchard Narrows

High Levels of Biotoxin Expand Closure Area

BREMERTON, WA—Marine biotoxins that cause paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) have been detected in very high levels in shellfish samples from the Liberty Bay Marina located in Poulsbo in Kitsap County. As a result, the Washington State Department of Health and the Kitsap Public Health District have expanded the biotoxin closure area on the west shoreline of Bainbridge Island from the Point White north to Point Monroe, and on the east shoreline of the Kitsap mainland from Point Jefferson south to Illahee State Park, including all bays and inlets (including Liberty Bay and Miller Bay), to recreational shellfish harvesting for all species of clams, oysters, and mussels.

Samples of mussels collected on July 28th from the Liberty Bay Marina contained PSP toxin concentrations of 747 micrograms per 100 grams of shellfish tissue. Shorelines are closed to harvesting when toxin levels exceed 80 micrograms per 100 grams of tissue.

Existing biotoxin closures for all species of shellfish are in effect for butter clams and varnish clams remains on Kitsap County's eastern shoreline from the Point No Point in Hansville south to the south shoreline of Bainbridge Island and closures for varnish clams only remains in effect for Yukon Harbor and Colvos Passage to the Pierce County line.

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 toxins prior to distribution, and are safe to eat.

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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. Kitsap Public 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 the hotline number at 1-800-2BE-WELL, or visit us online at www.kitsappublichealth.org. 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.

This notice supersedes previous shellfish biotoxin notices.

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