

# CLEAN SAMISH INITIATIVE

Skagit County Public Works



## Dog poop in the yard - a stinkin' problem!

Got a dog? When your dog poops in your yard, what do you do? Is your answer to leave it be or toss it over the fence where nobody can see it? If so, we'd like you to consider changing that plan.

Dog poop is raw sewage. It is NOT fertilizer. Like human poop, it's full of pathogens that can transmit disease to your family, your dog, and other animals. Some pathogens remain infectious for YEARS.

Rainwater picks up what it touches, like poop, and carries it to our local creeks and beaches. Even if you're not near a creek, runoff carries poop and pathogens there. More than once, we've found dog poop is the cause of high bacteria in the water.

Kids play in creeks. Pets play in creeks. And everyone loves a trip to the beach. So if you're not cleaning up that poop, you're exposing yourself and your whole community to pathogens.

Please do your part to be PoopSmart, and scoop the poop. Find out more at [poopsmart.org](http://poopsmart.org).



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## Clean Samish Initiative succeeds in improving water quality

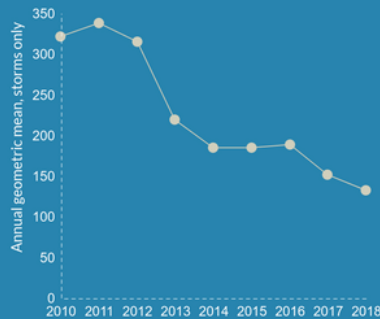
We are pleased to report that, with the help of residents like you, we've reduced bacteria levels in the Samish River by 60%. Commercial shellfish beds are also closed for far fewer days in spring than they used to be.

While we are closing in on our goal of safe water for everyone, we still have a lot of work to do. We've found and fixed most of the "easy" problems like farm animals standing in creeks and failed septic systems. Now we're left with the things that are harder to see. Things like dog poop that's not cleaned up. Or a septic system that works fine in the summer when groundwater levels are low, but gets flooded in winter. Or pastures that are poorly managed, leading to muddy, manure-filled conditions that run off in the next rainstorm.

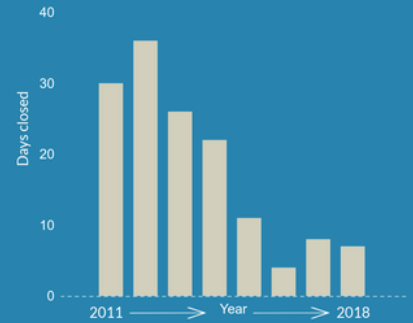
We all have a part in reaching our goal of safe water for everyone. So thanks for doing your part!

## Clean Samish Initiative Successes 2010-2018

Average bacteria levels have reduced significantly



Commercial shellfish beds are closed for fewer days in spring



**260+**

Best management practices implemented on farms



**330**

Septic systems identified as failed or seriously deficient



**46+**

Farm plans completed



**12+**

Pet waste stations maintained by Skagit County or community partners



### Progress Made!

November 2017 - Washington Department of Health updates the rules for closing the bay due to reduced pollution. This has resulted in fewer precautionary shellfish harvest closures.

### Free local hay!\*



\*From your own land when you use rotational grazing

## Saving your wallet (and your sanity) with help from the Skagit Conservation District

Feed bills. Vet bills. Not to mention the time that mud adds to chores! It's expensive to have a small farm.

Did you know that you can save yourself money and time by changing the way you manage your pastures? Winter is the best time to have SCD visit your farm so they can see the problems and offer solutions. Their services are FREE, confidential, and they may even be able to help with free grant funds to fix problems! Find them at [skagitcd.org](http://skagitcd.org), or 360-428-4313.

## Fix septic system problems before they become expensive failures!

Everyone knows a septic system failure is expensive to fix. So why don't more people fix the cheap, little problems before they turn into big, expensive ones?

We get it. There are more fun things to do with your money. But, just like an oil change for your car, money spent now will save you a lot later on. Whether it's getting your system pumped or fixing a broken baffle, don't forget and end up with a big, smelly mess.

You can find all our best maintenance tips (and a few groan-worthy puns) at [poopsmart.org/septic](http://poopsmart.org/septic).



## Partners try new and innovative source tracking methods

With the help of grants from EPA, Skagit County and it's partners are exploring new and innovative techniques that may prove to be helpful in understanding where pollution is coming from.

We are continuing to partner with the University of Washington Center for Urban waters to develop a way to look for chemicals in the water (like caffeine or veterinary drugs) that might give us an idea of where pollution is



Dr. Andy James from the University of Washington joined in several sampling events.

coming from. Because this is brand new science, it's taking some time and experimentation to get it right. We hope that the next few years of work will result in a tool that will be helpful for us, and for the rest of the Puget Sound region.

We're also partnering with the EPA Region 10 Manchester Laboratory on a two year project to use DNA to identify sources. We plan to start in the fall of this year. We tried this method in 2010, but the science was still very new and our results were not as reliable as we had hoped. Though there are still many questions about the method's reliability, projects around the region are showing that it is worth trying again. We'll keep you posted on the results!



We're working with labs at EPA and the University of Washington.



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## Classes, Events & Resources

### Septic Systems 101 Online

Learn the basics of owning and operating a septic system to keep it working well for as long as possible.  
[skagitcounty.net/Septics101online](http://skagitcounty.net/Septics101online)

### Septic Systems 201 (In-person only)

Save money on inspections by learning how to inspect your own septic system (simple gravity systems only). Classes are taught several times a year. Join the wait list at [skagitcounty.net/Septics101online](http://skagitcounty.net/Septics101online)

### Skagit River Salmon Festival

Sept 7, 11am-6pm, Edgewater Park, Mount Vernon, \$5 adults, kids are free. Don't miss one of the best festivals the Skagit Valley has to offer!

### Watershed Masters Training

Wednesdays, Sept 25-November 23, 6-9pm, Padilla Bay Research Reserve. Learn from local experts about water quality, marine life, salmon, stream ecology, geology, climate change, and more. More info at [skagitcd.org](http://skagitcd.org).

**PoopSmart.org:** A centralized source of information for homeowners. Find how to get information about your septic system, money-saving tips for small farmers, and more!



### Learn More!

[skagitcounty.net/cleanwater](http://skagitcounty.net/cleanwater)

Find us on 

@SkagitCountyCleanWater

 **YouTube**

[bit.ly/CleanWaterYouTube](http://bit.ly/CleanWaterYouTube)