

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT LEADS TO EVALUATION PERIOD CHANGE

JANUARY 2019

The Clean Samish Initiative has made great progress in improving water quality during the past 8 years (see figure). Samish Bay has more than 4,000 acres of commercial shellfish beds; an upgrade is crucial to meeting the statewide goal of upgrading 10,800 acres of shellfish beds by 2020.

Why did the evaluation period need to be changed?

Since 2011, we've used the spring period (March through June) to evaluate success. However, new data shows that the spring period no longer accurately represents water quality conditions throughout the year.

Closures occur year round, so it makes more sense to evaluate based on the entire year rather than just one season. Early on, the majority of pollution closures happened in spring, so that was our focus. Overall, finding and fixing pollution sources has significantly reduced the number of pollution closures throughout the year.

What is the criteria for an upgrade?

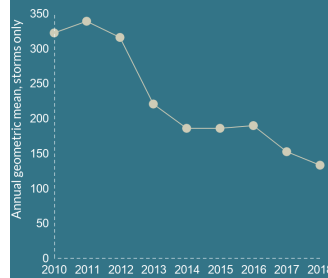
The Washington State Department of Health will evaluate the bay's classification at the end of each year, as it does for all other commercial shellfish beds in the state. The updated criteria provides more flexibility than previous criteria did. To upgrade the shellfish growing areas in Samish Bay, bacteria in the river must not exceed levels the Department of Health has determined will contaminate shellfish. However, if the river exceeds the critical bacteria levels but the pollution problems causing it are found and fixed, the shellfish growing area may still qualify for an upgrade.

Is it still possible to get an upgrade?

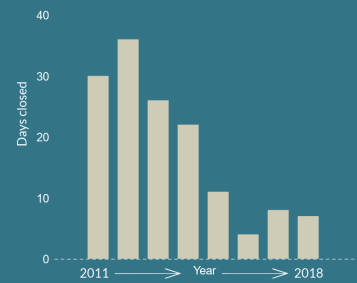
Yes! In the last year, we have succeeded in fixing several long-standing issues, and recently released a new public outreach campaign (poo-smart.org) to reach people in a new way. With these efforts, we believe it is possible to achieve an upgrade by 2020.

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.

For Questions or more information, contact **Scott Berbells**,
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