

Dear Neighbor:

Our county is blessed with the richness of our water resources including rivers, creeks, lakes, and miles of marine shoreline. Along with the economic benefits and recreational opportunities these resources provide comes the responsibility of our community to care for these resources for current uses and for future generations. Water quality deterioration is a real concern we currently face in Whatcom County.

The good news is we have been working to reduce bacterial pollution in our creeks, rivers, and marine waters and have seen great successes in the last several years.

- 810 acres of shellfish beds were reopened to harvest in Drayton Harbor in 2016.
- 129 acres of shellfish beds were reopened to harvest in Birch Bay in 2018.
- Spring shellfish harvesting restrictions were removed in Portage Bay in 2019 (October through December remain closed to harvest).
- 765 additional acres of shellfish beds were reopened to harvest in Drayton Harbor in 2019.

These improvements are achieved only by the actions of community members like you taking both small and large steps to eliminate sources of bacteria entering our surface waters...**thank you for your efforts!**

However, we still have more work to do. Half of the County's routine monitoring stations still show high bacteria levels, about 1,000 acres of shellfish beds remain closed to harvest at least three months of the year, and another 175 acres of shellfish beds are threatened with a closure due to declining water quality. These closures impact members of our community who depend upon shellfish harvest for their livelihood.

Whatcom County conducts water quality monitoring to identify areas where the highest bacteria levels are found and then works with landowners to fix problems. More information about water quality in your neighborhood can be found at www.co.whatcom.wa.us/1072/Water-Quality or through the interactive county-wide water quality maps at www.whatcomcounty.us/2618/Interactive-Water-Quality-Maps.

In the upcoming months, Whatcom County and the Whatcom Conservation District may be reaching out to you to offer technical and financial assistance to evaluate and address potential bacteria sources related to septic systems, small farms, and other animals. We encourage you to join your community in using these tools to not only help improve water quality, but also to save you money in the maintenance of your septic systems and to reduce mud and improve pastures to benefit your farm animals' health.

We greatly appreciate your attention to this urgent matter. It will take all of us working together to solve these problems. Feel free to contact Erika Douglas at Public Works-Natural Resources at (360) 778-6294 to learn more about our water quality programs and free resources to assist landowners.

Sincerely,

Satpal Singh Sidhu
County Executive

Barry Buchanan
County Council Chair