

# Birch Bay Clam Inventory

## June 6, 2004

### What is the Clam Inventory?

The Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee is coordinating an inventory of clams in Birch Bay. The inventory in Birch Bay will be conducted along 10 to 15 transects running from the shoreline to the water at low tide. Volunteers will be digging sample holes every 100 feet along each transect and identifying, measuring, and counting the different types of clams they find in each hole. All of the clams will be returned to the survey hole.



### Why is the Inventory Being Done?

Shellfish - those both recreationally and commercially harvested - are key marine resources for Whatcom County. In many Whatcom County shoreline areas, native clams may serve as indicator species and help us gain an understanding of the health of the shellfish resource, water quality impacts, and harvesting impacts. Birch Bay is the largest recreational shellfish harvesting area in Whatcom County. Anecdotal evidence suggests that clam populations in some areas of Birch Bay are declining. Birch Bay is currently on the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) shellfish area watch list as "threatened". A threatened status indicates that the DOH has noticed a downward trend in water quality at one of their regular sampling sites in this area.



#### **This inventory will provide:**

- Baseline information about the types, numbers and sizes of clams found in Birch Bay.

#### **The information will be used to:**

- Describe the clams that are found in Birch Bay to the community, local agencies, and visitors.
- Work with the community to provide more information to residents and visitors about how to protect this valuable resource.
- Help identify potential sites for enhancement or restoration of clam populations.

### Who is Involved?

The Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee is coordinating the inventory and information that is collected.

Community volunteers are being recruited to assist with the inventory, provide their knowledge about the resource, and to learn even more about clams in Birch Bay.

Tideland property owners that are affected by the location of the transects are being contacted to request permission to conduct the surveys and to answer questions about the MRC and the project. We hope many of the tideland owners will join us for a day on the tideflats!



<http://www.whatcom-mrc.wsu.edu/MRC/index.htm>