

Chuckanut Bay Clam Inventory

August 27, 2004

What is the Clam Inventory?

The Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee is coordinating an inventory of clams in northern Chuckanut Bay, the area also known as "Mud Bay". The inventory at Mud Bay will be conducted along transects, lines surveyed across the tideflats. Volunteers will be digging sample holes every 40 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.



Surveying at Birch Bay

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. Surveys also document the status of newcomers such as the rapidly spreading varnish clam. Historically, Mud Bay and other areas of Chuckanut Bay have been popular for recreational and tribal shellfish harvesting. Chuckanut Bay was closed to shellfish harvest in 1994 after tests showed high counts of fecal coliform bacteria. Improvements have been made to water quality, such as upgrading septic systems and watershed protection measures. There is still more work to be done to protect water quality and the shellfish resources.



This inventory will provide:

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

The information will be used to:

- Describe the clams found in Chuckanut Bay to the community and local, state and tribal agencies.
- 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 Chuckanut Bay.

We hope many of the Chuckanut Bay Community will join us for a day on the tideflats! For registration or more information contact Doug Stark, 676-6876 or dstark@co.whatcom.wa.us



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