



Marine Park Clam Survey May 26, 2005



What is the Clam Survey?

The Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) is coordinating a survey of clams along Whatcom County shorelines. These surveys will be conducted during low tide along transects - lines stretching across the tideflats from the upper beach to the water. Volunteers will be digging sample holes every 40 feet along each transect, identifying 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 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. Marine Park has historically been a popular clamming beach for Bellingham residents, however urban sources of pollution may be a concern. With the recent restoration of the park's shoreline by the Port of Bellingham, a survey of the current clam population would provide information for comparison in future surveys. Surveys also document the status of introduced species such as the rapidly spreading varnish clam.



This inventory will provide:

- Baseline information about the types, numbers and sizes of clams found along the Marine Park tideland

The information will be used to:

- Describe Whatcom County's clam populations to the community and local, state and tribal agencies.
- Help identify potential sites for enhancement or restoration of clam populations.
- Work with the community to provide information to residents and visitors about how to protect this valuable resource.

What Parts of Whatcom County Will Be Surveyed?

The 2005 MRC clam surveys are exploring new territory June 23 on Cherry Point and July 23 at Birch Point. (Birch Bay, Chuckanut Bay and Semiahmoo Spit were surveyed in 2004.) Each of these areas provide unique surveying experiences suiting different interests and ability levels

Who Is Involved?

The Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee is coordinating the inventory and the information that is collected. The MRC has partnered with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and RE Sources for equipment and volunteer recruitment. 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. Community volunteers are being recruited to assist with the inventory, provide their knowledge about the resource, and to learn more about the clams of our shoreline.

For registration or more information contact Doug Stark, 676-6876 or dstark@co.whatcom.wa.us
<http://www.whatcom-mrc.wsu.edu/mrc>