Calendar

Upcoming events to watch for in *February/March* ...

Public meeting on the Clean Water District;

and in *May* ...

Watershed tour of the Clean Water District.

Please call the county for details!

Clinics

Septics 101 Clinics

Feb. 20, 2001	6–8 p.m.	Port Angeles Senior Center
Feb. 28, 2001	5–8 p.m.	Agnew Helpful Neighbors
March 20, 2001	6–8 p.m.	Dungeness School
April 17, 2001	6–8 p.m.	Carlsborg P.U.D. Ops Center
May 8, 2001	1–3 p.m.	Gardiner Comm. Center

Call Clallam County Environmental Health (below) for information, registration, as-builts.

Marine Resources Committee Workshops

Shellfish Resources & Water Quality
Feb. 5, 2001 6:30–9 p.m. John Wayne Marina

Oceanography of the Strait of Juan de Fuca
March 5, 2001 6:30–9 p.m. S'Klallam Tribal Center

Contact toll-free: Jill Buhler, 1.866.STRAITS

Contacts

Clallam County Environmental Health
223 E. 4th St./P.O. Box 863
Port Angeles, Wash. 98362-0149
360.417.2258

Valerie Wilson, watershed planner,
Clallam County Natural Resources
360.417.2543 vwilson@co.clallam.wa.us

Clallam Conservation District **360.452.1912 ext. 5**

Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe **360.681.4631**

Solutions to Pollution—

Things You Can Do *Right* Now! *Try a few!*

- Contact county for more information or referrals *(septics, clinics, water quality, Clean Water District, etc.).*
- Inspect/pump your septic system.
- Think about your yard as connected to downstream problems.
- Keep livestock & pets away from ditches & streams.
- Allow native plants & shrubs to grow on both sides of waterways to help absorb runoff & filter pollutants.
- Start a compost now for safer garden fertilizer next season—find out how from WSU-Cooperative Extension, **360.417.2279**, or call Clallam County.
- Attend Dungeness River Management Team monthly meeting, **360.417.2321**, or visit the website at www.olympus.net/community/dungenesswc
- Call Streamkeepers to see how you can help other volunteers monitor streams at **360.417.2281.**
- Come to the Clean Water District public meeting or Watershed Tour (dates to be announced).
- Contact Clallam Conservation District for more about livestock or animal waste management.

Questions? Comments? Confused?

Call shellfish response team leader Val Wilson for the straight scoop, & we'll include questions & answers in future updates.

Coming soon: **What's in our water, & where?**

Produced by Nature's Voice, written by Jana M. Suchy with thanks to Nash Huber and all other contributors
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Certified Acronym-Free

Shellfish Closure Area in Dungeness Bay

Clean Water District Proposed Boundary

RECYCLED PAPER

Clean Water Herald
Clallam County
Environmental Health/Natural Resources
P.O. Box 863
Port Angeles, Wash. 98362-0149

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ECRWSS
To: Watershed Resident

The Clallam County

February 2001

Clean Water Herald

Introducing the Clean Water District, to help all watershed residents become informed, involved, and part of the solution to water pollution in our own backyard.

To protect public health in the Sequim-Dungeness Valley, the Washington Department of Health closed shellfish harvest in some areas of Dungeness Bay on April 25th, 2000. This closed area will expand soon.

The closure required the formation of a shellfish protection district. You join about 15,000 of your neighbors as potential charter members in this district.

Whether you personally go clamming or not, or even if you never eat oysters, clams, or mussels, the shellfish closure affects us all. It is merely a *symptom* of the much bigger problem: **polluted water**.

We all need water to live. Clean water. The Dungeness Valley is prized for its stunning beauty, productive agriculture, and favorable climate. It is a good place to live, a wonderful place to visit. Our economy—and our quality of life itself—depend on clean water. Now Dungeness Bay joins a growing list of shellfish closure areas all around Puget Sound, including Sequim Bay.

We have a problem. Why? What do we do about it, & how do we fix it?

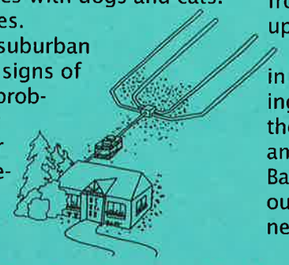
This is an opportunity to stop and look around at what's happening to our quality of life. It's a wake-up call. But together we can stem, and then turn the tide of declining water quality. It will take all of us, and you can start to help just by reading this.

Houston, we have a problem ...

Look around at this great place. Many of us live here for a reason. The mountains, the ocean, the rivers and streams. We are rich with wildlife, fields, forests, barns, and beaches. It's beautiful. It's clean. It's rural.

But look around again. We are changing the very landscape we love. Carving farms and forests into parcels and lots. Putting in septic systems by the hundreds. Drilling wells. Widening roads. Straightening rivers. Moving dirt. Building. Paving. Growing manicured lawns. Raising some sheep, horses, or cattle on a few acres of paradise. Filling our hearts and homes with dogs and cats. Herding livestock on shrinking ranges.

We're headed toward creating a suburban environment here, and we're seeing signs of problems in the landscape. Serious problems. Water quality problems. In our tidelands, our streams, our river, our groundwater, our wells, even our life-giving irrigation ditches.



Houston, we have a problem.

What is clean water, & what happened to it?

Clean water is fishable, swimmable, and drinkable. It can support healthy populations of fish and other forms of aquatic life. Here on the Olympic Peninsula our cold, clean, fresh-flowing waters long provided ideal habitat for salmon, our beaches boasted a wealth of shellfish.

Clean water is water you can touch without getting sick from infection or disease. It's water you can safely drink from the faucet. Contact with poisons or pathogens in our water can spread illness or epidemics—everything from cholera, typhoid, and infectious hepatitis to stomach upset or "blue baby" syndrome.

Having long enjoyed the benefits of clean water here in the Rainshadow, we entered the new millennium showing signs of trouble. Tests on water samples told a tale of the changing landscape. Pollutants. Sometimes alarming amounts of pollutants. In creeks and ditches. In Sequim Bay. In the Dungeness River, in groundwater, in some of our wells. And now too, in the marine waters of Dungeness Bay.

The danger to public health from eating contaminated shellfish
prompted the state to close about 300 acres of Dungeness Bay to shellfish harvest.
This action sets in motion the required steps to try and fix the problem.
It's important to remember that the shellfish are not the problem—
they are only a symptom of a problem with our water.
And pollutants in the water are signs of trouble in the landscape.
Signs of trouble in the whole watershed.

What's a Watershed?

A watershed is the landscape's giant sink. High edges define the land basin that drains to a common outlet. Like a sink. For instance, the Dungeness River drains its entire watershed basin to the common outlet of Dungeness Bay.

All waters in a watershed connect—above ground and below, freshwater and marine, yours and your neighbors'. Water connects us all.

Clams Cram!

This closure affected both recreational and commercial shellfish harvesting. The water is too polluted to safely eat the shellfish because they "filter feed."

For instance, a clam might filter as much as 40 gallons of water a day, keeping pollutants in its tissues while returning cleaner water to the bay. Just like a filter. These contaminants the clam "kept" may be harmful to humans who eat the clam, & make us sick.

What's the Clean Water District?

Although state law requires counties to form a *shellfish protection* district in response to a shellfish area closure caused by pollution, we may call it by another name.

County commissioners still need to approve the boundaries of the district, but expect to do so early this year. They are considering the Dungeness River Management Team's recommendation to use their management area as the same boundary for the Clean Water District. Picture an area stretching from all of Sequim Bay in the east to Bagley Creek (just east of Deer Park Road) in the west, from the ocean shores up to the mountains *(please see map on back).*

We chose the watershed approach to our protection district because we have signs of water quality problems all over the watershed. We chose it because upland freshwater flows downstream into marine waters of the bays or strait, taking pollutants with it.

And because the entire watershed is connected to the pollution, and the entire watershed is connected to the solution, we named it the Clean Water District.

What's causing the pollution?

The source of this type of pollution is hard to see and hard to find, but it is *the largest cause of water pollution across America today.* It comes from many small sources spread out all over the landscape, a little bit here, a little bit there. They call it *nonpoint source* pollution.

Water washes the landscape
and flows downhill.
This dirty "wash water" drains into
our rivers and streams, flowing
downstream, to the ocean.

Because what we do on the land
tends to end up in the water,
by our actions—good or bad—
we are all stewards of
the watershed.

A Pollution Point

Stretching back almost 30 years to the 1972 Clean Water Act, America first focused its efforts to clean up water pollution on those big, easily pinpointed sources—the obvious pipes spewing raw sewage or untreated industrial waste. They called this *point source* pollution.

But after years of regulation that largely cleaned up these point sources, we still found polluted water—lots of it. This time we had to look harder to find the cause, and discovered it came not from pipes or "points" but from the land itself.

And that's how nonpoint got its confusing name.

Nonpoint pollution is also known as *runoff* pollution. You don't need much rain to get runoff. And all water flows downhill, taking whatever with it—dirt, oil, grease, pesticide. So you can also get runoff from washing the car, from spring snowmelt, from irrigating fields or watering the garden. Water runs off the land, carrying pollutants with it, into the streams, ditches, rivers, lakes, and ocean.

By its nature, runoff pollution is hard to see and hard to measure, difficult to trace, and equally hard to eliminate. For instance, if you spread Weed & Feed on your lawn today, and it rains tonight, you can bet a lot of that fertilizer and pesticide will wash away and run off with the rain. You couldn't tell by looking at the lawn tomorrow, and you couldn't much see it in the ditches and streams swollen with rainwater either. But it's there all the same, poisons and excess nutrients harming the quality of our water.

Here in the Sequim-Dungeness, runoff washes contaminants into our waters that pose a public health risk.

When it runs off with the rain, even good stuff goes bad!

manure ... inadequate, overloaded, or failing septic systems ... pet waste ... fertilizers ... pesticides ... soil ... toxic household products ... wildlife waste ... road oil ... stormwater ...

And it all adds up, bit by bit, over time.

How do we solve our pollution problems?

The same way we got here—bit by bit, over time. By individual actions and neighborly cooperation, with community effort and support. By changing some of our behaviors and habits, in our own backyards.

There are no simple solutions to complex problems, and no quick fixes. But we each can do many things to help. Reading this announcement is an important step, and we thank you for that.

Studies already launched in both marine- and freshwaters will help us find the pollution sources that need cleaning up. State and local agencies, organizations, and the tribes are teamed together with the county to identify sources of pollutants, determine how much has to be reduced to meet safe levels, how best to do that, and where.

How do you clean up the landscape's giant sink?
It's a big job, but where needed we can:

fence animals out of waterways ... replace irrigation ditches with pipes ... better manage our animals' waste ... maintain septics & repair or replace failures ... grow native plants as vegetation buffers ... reduce bare, eroding soil ...

Try a few solutions on the back page!

But government isn't going to solve this problem. Only you can—the residents and stewards of the watershed. You, by your actions, plus your neighbors' actions, multiplied by many actions within the community, *can make a difference* in turning the tide of declining water quality in our own backyard.

Our goals in the new Clean Water District:

encourage voluntary actions,
provide information that helps understanding,
promote environmental stewardship, and
help find ways to finance fixes.

We have a problem. But with your help, clean water is definitely within our grasp!