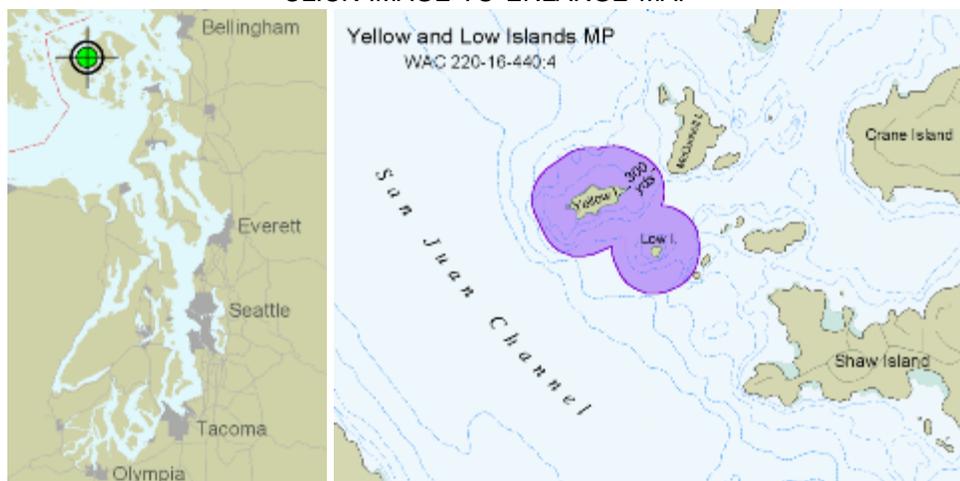


Yellow and Low Islands Marine Preserve

[WAC 220-16-440\(4\)](#): "All tidelands and bedlands within 300 yards of Yellow Island and 300 yards of Low Island." *Effective since 3/31/1990.*

CLICK IMAGE TO ENLARGE MAP



Geographic Statistics

Links to other imagery about this site

Area Type	Acres	Hectares
Intertidal	1.54	0.62
Subtidal	185.65	75.13
Total	187.18	75.75

- [Oblique aerial photos from the WA Dept. of Ecology](#) (Yellow Island only)
- [Satellite photos of the area from Terraserver at Microsoft](#)

Yellow Island, seen from the SW



Low Island, seen from the NE



Recreational Restrictions / Openings		
Species	Status	Comments, notes...
Salmon	Closed	
Trout	Open	
Bottomfish	Closed	
Shellfish	Closed	
Forage Fish	Limited	Fishing only for herring is allowed.
Unclassified	Open	
Commercial Restrictions / Openings		
Species	Status	Comments, notes...
Salmon	Closed	
Bottomfish	Closed	
Shellfish	Closed	
Forage Fish	Limited	Fishing only for herring is allowed.
Unclassified	Closed	

Introduction and Purpose

The Yellow and Low Islands Marine Preserve is one of the five San Juan Marine Preserves created in 1990 in conjunction with the University of Washington's Friday Harbor Laboratories (FHL). WDFW created these partial-take

reserves after FHL requested that the intertidal and subtidal waters adjacent to their upland biological preserves be protected from harvesting pressure for bottomfish and invertebrates.

The primary goals of this reserve are to foster stewardship of unique or important resources or habitats, provide research and education areas, and provide baseline areas or reference sites.

Prominent and unique features

The Yellow and Low Island Marine Preserve surrounds two islands in San Juan Channel and forms a unique insular zone of protection in the northern inland marine waters of Washington.

The larger Yellow Island is composed of bedrock and eroding sedimentary material that forms a low-bank shoreline on the south, and a slightly higher bluff on the north side of the island.

Low Island is primarily low and flat bedrock outcropping to the northeast of Yellow Island. Jagged rocky ridges and fields of boulders surround much of the island in the subtidal zone, extending to depths of over 100 feet (mllw). These substrates form precipitous walls and many crevices for fishes and invertebrates to hide. Bladed kelps such as *Laminaria saccharina* and foliose red algae cover the rocky habitats in the photic zone. Kelp beds consisting of bull kelp (*Nereocystis leutkeana*) border sections of the island.

Description of fish, bird, and mammal resources at the site

The rocky habitats provide the habitat for rockfishes and greenlings. Dominant species include copper rockfish (*Sebastes caurinus*), quillback rockfish (*S. maliger*), Puget Sound rockfish (*S. emphaeus*), lingcod (*Ophiodon elongatus*), and kelp greenling (*Hexagrammos decagrammus*).

Programs in place to manage the site

WDFW manages the site as partially-protected marine reserve for non-tribal citizens. WDFW regulations prohibit commercial and recreational fishing for bottomfish and classified shellfish. Recreational and commercial fishing may occur for the harvesting of salmon, trout, and forage fishes except that commercial fisheries for forage fishes are limited to Pacific herring (*Clupea harengus pallasii*). WDFW regulations allow the taking of unclassified fish and invertebrates by recreational fishers.

The Nature Conservancy owns most of the upland portions of the site and this institution can be considered as co-managers. The preserve was created at the request of the University of Washington's Friday Harbor Laboratories as a place for researchers to study and access marine organisms in a natural condition. The Nature Conservancy has posted many signs in the upland habitat declaring it a biological preserve and has an agreement with WDFW to provide shore-based signs declaring a restricted fishing zone. There is a resident site manager on Yellow Island who actively informs boaters of the fishing restrictions.

The enforcement of the harvest restrictions is primarily relegated to the Enforcement Program of WDFW. Information on the site boundaries and restrictions is found in WDFW's Sport Fishing Pamphlet and formal regulations are published at the State of Washington's Administrative Code available on the state's web site. WDFW is developing specific pamphlets describing each of its marine reserves.

WDFW scientists conduct occasional surveys of the fish community during which species are identified, counted, and measured. Research conducted at the Friday Harbor Marine Preserve is used to evaluate the effectiveness of reserves in San Juan Channel.

Issues of concern

The allowance of recreational fishing for salmon and the subsequent unintentional harvest of other species may limit the ability of fish populations to increase to natural levels.

Anchoring by recreational boaters and researches may cause damage to the substrate and the habitat for bottomfish and invertebrates.

The remote location of the San Juan Marine Preserves makes enforcement difficult.

The reserve is located in a heavy use area by recreational and commercial passenger vessels. A potential threat exists from vessel collisions or groundings and subsequent oil discharge into the reserve.

Performance measures

- The continued presence of a diverse fish community.
- Increasing or sustained abundances of copper rockfish and lingcod.

WDFW Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within Puget Sound

- Increasing and sustained large individual sizes of copper rockfish and lingcod.
- The increasing or sustained high nesting activity by lingcod.