

Monitoring Recreational Shellfishing

Keeping watch over one of Puget Sound's most important resources



Additional Puget Sound shellfish monitoring will help WDFW:

- Meet priority research needs
- Increase the number of Puget Sound shellfish beaches being sampled
- Improve the value of commercial fishing in the state
- Optimize shellfish harvest opportunities (number of angler days)
- Expand WDFW's engagement with shellfishers, increasing compliance with regulations

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Puget Sound shellfishing is booming.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in summer 2020, a surge in outdoor recreation led to crowded trailheads, busy boat launches, and increased fishing pressure on shellfish in Puget Sound, especially crab, clams, and oysters.

In 2021, an unprecedented heat wave led to shellfish die-offs throughout the Sound, raising new questions about how extreme weather events might impact populations in the future.

With more than 220,000 Washington shellfish license holders, accurate and timely monitoring of shellfish populations and harvest rates was already a challenge. But these recent, extraordinary events highlight how much additional help is needed.

WDFW is requesting funding to add staff capacity (equivalent to 2.7 full-time positions) to enhance its data collection and population monitoring for Puget Sound shellfish, to support sustainable populations and ensure this vital resource is available for future generations.

Improved monitoring will also help WDFW be more responsive to unexpected circumstances -- such as 2020's surge in recreation and the 2021 shellfish die-off -- and help meet obligations with tribal co-managers.

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