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DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Creating Solutions for Our Future

Michael Welter
Director

June 2, 2008

Dear Interested Parties:

Subject: Geoduck Farming and the Shoreline Permitting Process

Over the course of the past year, Thurston County has been contacted by several citizens and representatives of the shellfish industry concerning the expansion of inter-tidal geoduck aquaculture in the Puget Sound and the new practice of individual property owners leasing tidelands to Shellfish Growers for geoduck aquaculture.

As you may know, the State of Washington is in the process of reviewing the science and issues related to geoduck aquaculture. SSHB 2220 passed by the legislature in 2007 directed the Washington Department of Ecology to manage this review and directed other related activities.

The Shellfish Aquaculture Regulatory Committee was created pursuant to the legislation. According to the Ecology web site the charge of the committee is to:

1. Develop recommendations for an integrated regulatory process for all current and new shellfish aquaculture projects. The review process includes applicable federal and state permit processes. The committee will report its recommendations and findings to state lawmakers by December 1, 2008.
2. Advise Ecology on new geoduck aquaculture guidelines to assist local Shoreline master Program updates. These guidelines will be adopted by rule into Ecology's Shoreline Master Program Guidelines. The department estimates the rule-making process will occur from about mid-2008 to mid-2009.
3. Oversee the intertidal geoduck scientific research program. The committee will advise the Sea Grant Program on research topics and priorities, and ensure that research meets planning, permitting and management needs.

Additional information can be found at the committee web site;
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/shellfishcommittee/index.html>. Contact with the committee can be made with Curt Hart at 360-407-6990 or 360-480-7908; or at char461@ecy.wa.gov

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Thurston County continues to watch the state review process and plans to participate and contribute as necessary and useful to assisting toward a definitive result. Until this process is concluded, Thurston County will attempt to determine if a known geoduck farm proposal meets the definition of development based on the specific proposal. This will be done on a case by case basis and will require some level of cooperation with growers to be able to make a determination prior to planting. If the development threshold is met the proposal is subject to compliance with the Shoreline Master Program for the Thurston Region and the Washington State Shoreline Management Act.

Thank you for your continued interest in this issue. Until the state review process is complete, we respectfully suggest that concerned citizens contact the various state agencies involved for the best up to date information on the subject.

Best regards,

Michael Welter
Director