

Shellfish Aquaculture Regulatory Committee Recommendations Guidelines For Geoduck Aquaculture Operations

INTRODUCTION

Issue Statement

The Pacific geoduck, *Panopea abrupta*, is an exceptionally large clam native to the marine waters of Washington. Geoducks normally live over a wide range of water depths, from the lower intertidal down to more than 200 feet. Geoducks can live longer than 100 years. In recent years international demand for geoducks has increased and geoducks are commercially harvested by divers. Recently shellfish growers have developed aquaculture techniques to grow geoduck clams in the intertidal zone. The most common method involves inserting plastic tubes into the beach at low tide, planting cultured geoduck seed in the tubes, and covering the tubes with netting. The tubes and nets protect the baby clams from predators. When the geoduck clams reach market size, they are harvested by workers using water jets to loosen the sediment so the clams can be removed. Planting, harvest and maintenance of the tubes and nets all occur during low tides when the area where the clams are planted is exposed. In certain times of the year the low tides will occur at night.

The Department of Natural Resources, which administers state-owned aquatic lands, has been developing a program to lease land for geoduck aquaculture. Privately-owned intertidal areas have also been used for geoduck aquaculture. The conversion of vacant intertidal beaches to geoduck aquaculture has resulted in conflicts with existing shoreline uses, especially residences. The Shoreline Management Act is the key state law addressing shoreline land uses but local shoreline master programs lack provisions to address these conflicts.

The Shellfish Aquaculture Regulatory Committee

In response to these concerns, the Washington State Legislature passed Second Substitute House Bill 2220 (Chapter 216, Laws of 2007) relating to shellfish aquaculture. Among other provisions, the bill establishes the Shellfish Aquaculture Regulatory Committee to serve as the state advisory committee on geoduck aquaculture.

Members of the committee were appointed by the director of the Department of Ecology as follows:

- Two representatives of county government, one from a county located on the Puget Sound, and one from a county located on the Pacific Ocean;
- Two individuals who are professionally engaged in the commercial aquaculture of shellfish, one who owns or operates an aquatic farm in Puget Sound, and one who owns or operates an aquatic farm in state waters other than the Puget Sound;
- Two representatives of organizations representing the environmental community;

- Two individuals who own shoreline property, one of which does not have a commercial geoduck operation on his or her property and one of which who does have a commercial geoduck operation on his or her property; and
- One representative each from the following state agencies: The department of ecology, the department of fish and wildlife, the department of agriculture, and the department of natural resources.

In addition, the Governor invited the full participation of two tribal governments.

Assignments to the Shellfish Aquaculture Regulatory Committee and to Ecology

The Committee is assigned three tasks under this legislation:

Task 1: Develop recommendations for an integrated regulatory process for all current and new shellfish aquaculture projects.

Task 2: Oversee the intertidal geoduck scientific research program authorized by the bill.

Task 3: Develop recommendations as to appropriate guidelines for geoduck aquaculture operations to be included in shoreline master programs. When developing the recommendations for guidelines, the committee must examine the following:

- i. Methods for quantifying and reducing marine litter; and
- ii. Possible landowner notification policies and requirements for establishing new geoduck aquaculture farms.

The legislation directs the Department of Ecology to develop, by rule, guidelines for the appropriate siting and operation of geoduck aquaculture operations to be included in any local shoreline master program. The guidelines must be prepared with the advice of the shellfish aquaculture regulatory committee, which shall serve as the advisory committee for the development of the guidelines.

This document is the Committee's recommendations to Ecology on guidelines for geoduck aquaculture.

Shellfish Aquaculture Regulatory Committee Process

As detailed above, the Committee is a diverse group representing a wide range of perspectives on shellfish aquaculture. The Committee began meeting in July 2007 and generally met monthly through November of 2008. The Committee heard presentations by a wide range of experts on aquaculture and marine sciences and visited a geoduck aquaculture operation. Through these presentations and discussions among the Committee members, the members have reached general agreement on the need to manage geoduck aquaculture to achieve the goal of no net loss of ecological functions and to minimize conflicts with surrounding land uses. The Committee recommendations that follow reflect this general agreement while respecting the range of opinions held by the members.

Background on the Shoreline Management Act

Many federal, state and local laws and regulations address the types of issues raised by geoduck aquaculture. Perhaps the most important law that applies to uses along shorelines in Washington is the Shoreline Management Act (Chapter 90.58 RCW). All land uses and development in the defined shoreline area must comply with the Act. Most developments that occur on or near the shorelines are required to obtain and comply with shoreline permits. Permitting for most development is administered at the city or county level, with standards and requirements outlined in the local jurisdiction's Shoreline Master Program. Each city or county with shorelines within its jurisdiction adopts its own Master Program, which is a comprehensive use plan for the area. Once a Master Program is approved by the Department of Ecology, the county is the entity responsible for final approval of all programs falling within the plan's scope.

While each local jurisdiction develops its own Shoreline Master Program, the Department of Ecology adopts, by rule, guidelines for local master programs (Chapter 173-26 WAC). The Committee recommendations contained in this document will be used by the Department in developing new guidelines for how local master programs should address geoduck aquaculture.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GUIDELINES FOR GEODUCK AQUACULTURE

Overall Principles

The Committee recommends that guidelines for geoduck aquaculture be designed to meet the shoreline goal of achieving no net loss of ecological functions provided by shorelines and to minimize conflicts with other land uses.

In making its recommendations, the Committee recognizes that while requirements included in the Ecology guidelines and local master programs are enforceable, the guidelines and local master programs will not be revised very often. Because management of geoduck aquaculture should have the flexibility to respond to new aquaculture techniques or new scientific information about the ecological effects of geoduck aquaculture, the Committee generally recommends that detailed requirements, when appropriate, be contained in a guidance document developed and periodically updated by the Department of Ecology. The guidance document should contain detailed recommendations and best management practices that can be used by local jurisdictions in administering the local master programs. The best management practices should be consistent with those developed by the Department of Natural Resources and updated as new scientific information becomes available.

Specific Recommendations

The recommendations of the Shellfish Aquaculture Regulatory Committee are organized into three sections that fit with the structure of the Shoreline Management Act:

- I. Shoreline use designations
- II. Requirements for siting and operation, and
- III. Approval processes

I. Shoreline Use Designations

When a local shoreline master program is adopted, the local jurisdiction divides the shoreline zone into a number of separate shoreline environments. Specific shoreline uses are only allowed in certain environments. In addition to dividing the shoreline zone into these classifications, the local government may designate critical areas and can establish other overlays that allow or prohibit specific uses or impose additional requirements.

The Committee recommends that local jurisdictions identify where geoduck aquaculture would or would not be allowed, subject to site-specific reviews, when establishing shoreline designations. To meet the overall principle of no net loss of ecological functions, geoduck aquaculture should not be allowed in highly sensitive intertidal habitats. Adjacent land uses should also be considered to reduce the likelihood of conflicts. Committee members mentioned the need to protect habitats of sensitive species. Some Committee members also mentioned that upland uses can cause pollution that prevents shellfish harvest. Some Committee members suggested that Ecology provide more specific information on habitat issues to local jurisdictions as well as sources of data.

One Committee member recommends against prohibiting geoduck aquaculture through shoreline designations because it may raise concerns with tribal governments.

Designation Tools

The Committee discussed a number of tools that are available to local governments to designate areas where geoduck aquaculture is or is not allowed. One approach is to define sub-categories of the “aquatic” environment, with geoduck aquaculture only allowed in one (or some) of the sub-categories. Another approach is to define at least two critical saltwater habitat designations with geoduck aquaculture only allowed in one. Finally, local jurisdictions can do a special area plan for geoduck aquaculture that would be a separate overlay to the land use map. The Committee has no recommendation on which approach each local jurisdiction should take but offers this list of pros and cons.

Use Critical areas designations to better identify where geoduck aquaculture may be allowed

Pros:

1. Recreational and commercial shellfish beds are critical areas under GMA. Other critical areas (e.g., salmon, forage fish, eelgrass, bird nesting or rearing) may be located on shorelines where shellfish beds occur. Careful review of best available science required by the Growth Management Act (GMA) may allow adoption of mechanisms that protect water quality for shellfish beds while protecting functions and values of other critical areas.
2. Critical Area designations provide broad citizen input and participation

Cons:

1. Spatial mapping of eelgrass beds, forage fish, salmon rearing and migration, and other critical areas, as well as adjacent land use inventories would likely be needed prior to drawing specific geoduck aquaculture sites or districts on the map. Many jurisdictions have not mapped all their critical areas, making this difficult.
2. Purpose of Critical Area Ordinances under GMA is to designate and protect critical area functions and values. CAO designations are good for protecting critical areas from water quality and habitat impacts but not really set up to address siting or operational conflicts

Use Shoreline Master Program aquatic environment designation to identify areas where geoduck aquaculture would be allowed

Pros:

1. SMP updates require extensive inventory and characterization of natural resources and land use patterns within shoreline jurisdictions that would provide a framework for establishing a specialized aquatic designation
2. Aquaculture is a preferred water-dependent use under SMA when properly managed to assure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions.
3. SMP guidelines provide guidance for regulating uses such as aquaculture. It also provides guidance for shoreline modifications associated with aquaculture (piers, fill, groins, etc.)
4. SMP is good opportunity to inventory shoreline uses and prevent uses that are incompatible with preferred water-dependent uses or other uses or with navigation or public access
5. SMP allows for assignment of environmental designations that provide a framework for implementing shoreline policies and regulatory measures specific to local shoreline conditions
6. SMP updates require broad citizen input and participation
7. Several jurisdictions have already defined areas appropriate for aquaculture in the SMPs (Island County, Pierce County)

Cons:

1. There is disagreement within the SARC as to the level of detail that should be included for geoduck aquaculture in the WAC guidelines versus technical support appendices that may be updated more frequently. Less detail in the WAC provides less certainty for property owners concerned about conflicts and fewer criteria for DOE to assess consistency of the SMP with the SMA, but may provide jurisdictions more flexibility in developing their SMPs and shellfish farmers more flexibility in improving technologies.

Create special overlay (special area planning) to identify those areas where geoduck aquaculture may be allowed

Pros:

1. This is a regulatory tool that may be used to implement CAOs or SMPs in shorelines.

Cons:

1. Unless undertaken as part of CAO or SMP analyses, may be additional costs associated with inventory, analyses needed to provide technical rationale

II. Requirements for Siting and Operation

Siting of Geoduck Aquaculture projects

The Committee discussed issues related to whether geoduck aquaculture should be allowed on a specific site. The first consideration is whether the site has ecological characteristics that would be harmed by geoduck aquaculture to such a degree that the goal of no net loss could not be met.

The Committee recommends that geoduck aquaculture be restricted at sites where sensitive habitat features like eelgrass beds or salmon habitat would be damaged. A baseline habitat survey may be necessary to determine what ecological features are present at a proposed site. If only part of a site has sensitive features, the local jurisdiction may consider buffers to protect those features. The Committee recommends that the determination of sensitive habitat features be based on the area within which the site is located. For example, a habitat feature common in Willapa Bay may be considered sensitive in a portion of Puget Sound.

One Committee member recommends that the guidelines prohibit geoduck farming in designated forage fish spawning areas.

The Committee also recommends that geoduck aquaculture be restricted at sites that would require major physical alteration before use.

To minimize conflicts with adjacent land uses, the Committee recommends that local jurisdictions consider the sensitivity of surrounding land uses before approving new or expanded geoduck aquaculture operations. Public beaches, boat launches and high density upland residential developments might be sensitive to geoduck operations.

Operation of Geoduck Aquaculture projects

Stock selection and health

Growers obtain geoduck seed from hatcheries. Since the geoducks planted by aquaculture operations may reproduce before they are harvested, there is a potential for the cultured clams to affect the wild population. Research is currently being done on the genetics of wild and cultured geoducks.

Most members of the Committee recommend that the genetics issue be included as a general issue in the Guidelines and specific recommendations be included in guidance when they become available. Many Committee members recommend deferring to the Department of Fish and Wildlife on this issue.

Hatchery seed may also carry diseases and parasites. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has a program to determine whether seed pose a threat from diseases or parasites. The Committee recommends deferring to the Department of Fish and Wildlife on this issue.

Growing and Holding Pools

The Committee discussed the use of plastic pools placed in the intertidal to hold geoduck seed before planting. Representatives of geoduck growers told the Committee that holding pools are not part of each geoduck aquaculture site but are located at only a few locations. The Committee also considered the possibility of holding pools placed in the uplands or floating on barges.

Committee members recommend that upland holding pools be addressed by local jurisdictions like other upland aquaculture facilities.

Most Committee members recommend that intertidal holding pools, those placed directly on the intertidal substrate, should be limited in the total area covered and number of sites where they are permitted. Several Committee members recommend that intertidal holding pools not be included in the Ecology guidelines for geoduck aquaculture operations.

Buffers Between Planted Geoducks and Sensitive Habitats

The Committee recommends that buffers be required between sensitive habitats and planted geoducks. Most Committee members recommend a general statement about buffers be included in the Guidelines and recommended distances be included in guidance documents as recommended best management practices. Several Committee members recommend buffers of at least 25 feet from sensitive habitat elements.

Buffers Along Property Boundaries

Most Committee members recommend against requiring buffers between planted geoducks and property lines. Several Committee members recommend that the Guidelines have a general statement that buffers may be appropriate along property boundaries to avoid the need to cross property lines to plant and harvest the geoducks. One Committee member recommends buffers between planted geoducks and adjacent intertidal properties to prevent silt from harvesting to harm adjacent properties.

Alterations to the Site Before Planting

The Committee discussed how physical alterations to a site that is not “ready to go” may result in damage to ecological functions. The Committee recommends that a site should be fundamentally suitable for geoduck harvesting without the need for grading or rock removal. Most Committee members recommend including a statement that alterations should be restricted. Several Committee members recommend the Guidelines include standards that prohibit grading that changes shoreline profiles or removes natural epibenthic organisms and vegetation. They recommend that the guidelines minimize removal of rocks, logs, and other naturally occurring structures.

One Committee member recommends that tideland modification not be allowed that alters the natural substrate, vegetation, organisms, natural gravel/rocks essential for forage fish or fish habitat. Driving tractors and dragging barges along the beach should not be allowed.

Harvest of Wild Clams Before Planting

Most Committee members recommend that the Guidelines include a general statement about the need to respect Tribal shellfish rights when wild clams are harvested. Some Committee members recommend that this issue not be included in the guidelines because the Tribal shellfish rights are a matter of Tribal sovereignty, established by treaties and court rulings and are not subject to a local Shoreline Master Program.

Planting Density

Committee members generally recommend against establishing a limit for the number of tubes or clams per square foot or square meter. Instead, a number of Committee members recommend local consideration of the overall carrying capacity of the affected water body and the overall scale of geoduck aquaculture operations in each region. Many Committee members recommend dropping the issue of planting density from the Guidelines.

Timing of Planting or Harvest to Minimize Fish and Wildlife Effects

Most Committee members recommend a general statement in the Guidelines that local jurisdictions may restrict intensive aquaculture activities like inserting tubes or harvesting clams during times when sensitive fish or wildlife may be present. The need for such restrictions should be identified in the baseline identification of sensitive habitat features for the site. Several Committee members recommended that guidelines developed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for in-water construction be considered. One Committee member recommends avoiding operations that would disturb sensitive marine bird congregating and nesting areas during any sensitive period.

Materials Used for Predator Exclusion Devices (Tubes and Nets)

Although the visual impact of the tubes and nets used to protect geoducks from predators has been identified as a serious issue, Committee members generally indicate that ecological impacts are more important than aesthetic impacts. Most Committee members recommend a general statement in the guidelines that materials should be selected to minimize their visual impact. Several of these Committee members recommend that best management practices be included in guidance. One Committee member recommends that plastics be prohibited in intertidal or subtidal areas. Several Committee members recommend that this issue not be included in the Guidelines.

Ecological Effects of Predator Exclusion Devices

The Committee recommends that the Guidelines address the ecological effects of tubes, nets and other predator exclusion devices. Several Committee members recommend that a general statement about reducing ecological effects be included in the Guidelines. Several Committee members recommend that predator exclusion devices be designed to minimize ecological effects, including effects on birds and mammals. Several Committee members recommend that growers remove tubes and nets as soon as they are no longer needed for predator exclusion. Several recommend that there be limits on the portion of a site that is covered by tubes and nets at any one time. One Committee member recommends that standards be established for net sizes to minimize

harm to birds and other species. One Committee member recommends that standards be established for net sizes, percentage of tidelands allowed to be covered, length of time in place and timing.

Effects of Harvest

Most Committee members recommend that the Guidelines include a general statement on the need to manage the effects of water jets or other methods used to harvest geoduck clams. They recommend that best management practices be included in guidance. Several Committee members recommend that harvest be avoided during periods of spawning and incubation in identified forage fish spawning areas. Several Committee members recommend limits on noise from water pumps if there are not general limits on noise. One Committee member recommends a process for people to make complaints and have them resolved. Most Committee members recommend that local jurisdictions consider performance-based standards tailored to the locations where geoduck aquaculture is allowed.

Notifying Property-owners and Tribes of Operations

The Committee considered when owners of nearby properties and Tribes should be notified by local governments or growers of operational steps like planting geoducks or harvesting. Most Committee members recommend that local jurisdictions follow their normal notification procedures to inform nearby property owners and Tribes of the types of activities that will occur at a geoduck aquaculture operation. They recommend this notice be provided one time when the operation is being established. Some Committee members recommend that local jurisdictions have specific notice procedures for geoduck aquaculture which may differ by site depending on the surrounding uses. Several Committee members suggest that growers should notify neighbors when they are harvesting or replanting as a courtesy and to avoid potential conflicts but recommend that the Guidelines allow local governments to decide whether to require additional notification. Most Committee members recommend that the notice include information on how to make a complaint.

Site boundary marking or identification

Most Committee members recommend that geoduck aquaculture sites be surveyed and marked when they are established. Because most work at a geoduck aquaculture site occurs during low tides, several Committee members recommend surface markers rather than buoys. Some Committee members recommend that the waterway side be marked. Some Committee members recommend that sensitive habitat features on the site be marked to prevent harm. Some Committee members recommend against having special marking requirements for properties used for geoduck aquaculture.

Public Access

The Committee recommends against any requirement for public access to private tidelands. Two Committee members recommend that public access be allowed to public shorelines.

Access for Workers and Equipment

Most Committee members recommend that the Guidelines include a statement that growers must have legal access to a site and that the means and location of access must not result in impacts to critical areas. Several Committee members recommend that vessel operations and worker access be restricted to protect eelgrass beds or known forage fish spawning areas. They recommend that best management practices be included in guidance. One Committee member recommends buffers of at least 25 feet around eelgrass or other attached vegetation for farms in Puget Sound. One Committee member recommends that regulations insure that growers cannot cross private land without an easement document that is recorded with the county.

Locations of Parking and Staging Areas

Most Committee members recommend that local Shoreline Master Programs address parking and staging areas to minimize conflicts in adjacent upland areas and effects on shoreline ecological functions. Several Committee members recommend that growers describe planned parking and staging areas during the approval process. Several Committee members recommend against addressing this issue other than through best management practices.

Limits on Barge and Vessel Mooring

Most Committee members recommend a general statement that local jurisdictions may restrict barge and vessel mooring. Best management practices should be included in guidance. Some Committee members supported and other Committee members proposed a specific prohibition on mooring over submerged vegetation. One Committee member recommends limiting beaching of vessels on the shoreline. One Committee member recommends that vessels only be anchored in water on grower's site or state land lease and not for more than 3 days in any consecutive 30 day period. This Committee member also recommends that all vessels must be marked with navigation lights. One Committee member recommends against addressing this issue in the Guidelines.

Restrictions on Lights

Most Committee members recommend a general statement that lights near residential areas should be kept to a minimum and bright lights not be directed towards shore. They recommend that any best management practices be included in guidance. Several Committee members recommend that local shoreline programs have standards for all shoreline activities, to minimize impacts to adjacent uses and sensitive species. One Committee member recommends that harvesting activity not be allowed at night in residential neighborhoods.

Restrictions on Noise

Most Committee members recommend that local jurisdictions address noise from geoduck aquaculture operations along with other sources of noise in shoreline areas, using State noise standards as a starting point. Several Committee members recommend that noise controls also

protect birds. One Committee member recommends that harvesting activity not be allowed at night in residential neighborhoods. One Committee member recommends against addressing this issue in the Guidelines.

Limits on Timing of On-Site Work

Several Committee members recommend that the Guidelines contain a general statement that this issue should be addressed based on local conditions and adjacent land uses. One Committee member recommends that harvesting activity not be allowed at night in residential neighborhoods and that daytime harvesting be limited to weekdays. Several Committee members recommend avoiding on-site operations during periods of spawning and incubation in identified forage fish spawning areas. Several Committee members recommend that restrictions on hours of operation shouldn't only apply to geoduck aquaculture. One Committee member recommends against addressing this issue in the Guidelines.

Debris and Litter Management

The Committee was specifically directed to examine methods for quantifying and reducing marine litter. The Committee recommends that growers make every effort to prevent the loss of tubes, nets and other items and should recover litter and debris to the extent feasible. Committee members recommend a range of best management practices including selecting equipment and methods to prevent loss of tubes and nets and marking tubes and nets so the source of litter can be identified. Several Committee members recommend that local governments be a clearinghouse for litter report. Other Committee members recommend against this approach. One Committee member recommends requiring each grower to post a bond to pay for litter cleanup.

Requirements for Site Maintenance and Worker Training

Most Committee members recommend that the Guidelines include a general statement on the importance of site maintenance, sanitation and worker training with best management practices to be include in a guidance document. One Committee member recommends specific restrictions on storing materials on site and requirements for adequate sanitation and garbage facilities. One Committee member recommends that growers have copies of other permits or approvals on site when workers are present.

Spill Prevention and Response

Most Committee members recommend that a spill prevention and response plan be prepared for each geoduck aquaculture operation. One Committee member recommends a reference to Coast Guard and Ecology requirements. One Committee member recommends that best management practices be included in a guidance document. One Committee member recommends against addressing this issue in the Guidelines.

Prevention of Air, Water and Sediment Pollution

Three Committee members recommend a general statement on the need to prevent pollution. Some Committee members recommend a prohibition on the use of pesticides and herbicides while other members oppose a prohibition while noting that no chemicals are currently approved for geoduck aquaculture. One Committee member recommends including best management practices to prevent pollution in a guidance document. One Committee member recommends against including this issue in the Guidelines.

Equipment Maintenance

Most Committee members recommend a general statement in the Guidelines on the importance of equipment maintenance to preventing pollution and limiting noise. Several Committee members recommend that best management practices be included in a guidance document. One Committee member recommends requiring annual maintenance records. One Committee member recommends against including this issue in the Guidelines.

Recordkeeping and Reporting

Most committee members recommend a general statement in the Guidelines that growers should keep records of planting and harvest activities. Some Committee members recommend requiring detailed planting and harvesting records and counts of tubes and nets installed and removed to measure losses. Three Committee members recommend against requiring recordkeeping through local shoreline programs.

Monitoring, Performance Measures and Adaptive Management.

Most Committee members recommend that a baseline survey of the habitat features of a proposed site be undertaken as part of the approval process. Several Committee members recommend integrating monitoring and adaptive management into the local permitting process. Some Committee members recommend that geoduck proposals or farm plans include a monitoring and adaptive management program that provides a method for incorporating results of ongoing scientific studies into farm management practices. Some Committee members recommend that adaptive management be applied to the overall activity rather than to individual sites, others favor adaptive management of individual operations.

III. Approval Processes

Under the Shoreline Management Act, all uses in the shoreline zone must be consistent with the provisions of the local Shoreline Master Program but permits are only required for developments that exceed a dollar amount. The Washington Attorney General has issued an opinion that geoduck aquaculture isn't necessarily development.

Most members of the Committee recommend that there be a local approval process that provides for notice to the public and adjacent land owners, documents the local jurisdiction's determination that the operation is allowed by the local shoreline master program, allows for enforcement of the provisions of the local master program and allows for adaptive management.

Several Committee members recommend that the approval process ensure compliance with the Growth Management Act regarding no net loss of eelgrass and kelp beds and fish and wildlife habitat areas. They recommend a special emphasis on maintaining Puget Sound health.

Some Committee members recommend having provisions for experimental aquaculture methods.

Some Committee members favor an approval process that includes compliance with other required approvals and requires posting a bond.

One Committee member recommended that the approval process include agreement on how complaints should be made and addressed.

Public Notice

The Committee discussed notification of the public and adjacent landowners when a geoduck aquaculture operation is established. This is one of the specific assignments to the Committee.

The Committee recommends that the local jurisdiction provide public notice of a proposed new or expanded geoduck aquaculture operation regardless of the type of approval process being followed. When possible, the jurisdiction should follow the normal notice procedures for a shoreline permit.

Committee members differed on which landowners should receive a specific notice, some recommending all properties within 1000 feet, others recommending 300 feet or three shoreline parcels, whichever is greater.

Application Information

As part of any local approval process, the Committee recommends that two types of information be provided by the applicant, a baseline survey of the proposed site to allow consideration of the ecological effects and a narrative description of the proposed aquaculture activities.

Some Committee members favor an extensive baseline survey of all fish and wildlife critical areas, including the presence of kelp and eelgrass and use of the site by salmon, forage fish and marine birds. They recommend that the application include actions to minimize impacts to habitats and wild species and mitigation to ensure no net loss.

Most Committee members recommend that the description of the proposed aquaculture activities include information on the source of seed, predator exclusion devices, timing and areas of planting and harvest and access to the site. Committee members differed in the level of detail desired and the need to allow flexibility.

Approval Options

The Committee discussed the following list of approval options:

1. Shoreline Substantial Development Permit
2. Conditional Use Permit
3. Exemption statement
4. Enforcement on a complaint basis
5. Document other approvals
6. Posting a Bond

1. Shoreline Substantial Development Permit

Most of the Committee members recommend that a Substantial Development Permit only be required when it is triggered by project-specific characteristics, for example when operations substantially interfere with normal public use of the surface of state waters.

One Committee member recommends that a Substantial Development Permit be required for all geoduck operations and that Ecology be involved in assuring no net loss of ecological functions.

A couple of Committee members recommend that all new or expanded geoduck aquaculture operations in Puget Sound obtain either a Substantial Development Permit or a Conditional Use Permit, to support the State goal to recover Puget Sound by 2020.

2. Conditional Use Permit

As mentioned before, a couple of Committee members recommend that all new or expanded geoduck aquaculture operations in Puget Sound obtain either a Substantial Development Permit or a Conditional Use Permit, to support the State goal to recover Puget Sound by 2020.

One Committee member recommends that Ecology be involved in assuring no net loss of ecological functions. A Conditional Use Permit requires review by Ecology.

Most Committee members do not recommend requiring a Conditional Use Permit.

3. Exemption Statement

A local jurisdiction can issue a written determination that a proposed activity is consistent with the local Shoreline Master Program but exempt from obtaining a Substantial Development Permit. Most Committee members recommend that local governments follow this procedure when a Substantial Development Permit isn't otherwise required. Three Committee members recommend that a permit be required.

4. Enforcement on a Complaint Basis

Shoreline uses which are exempt from a Substantial Development Permit are sometimes undertaken without any prior approval by the local jurisdiction. The jurisdiction only becomes

involved and seeks compliance with provisions of the local Shoreline Master Program when the jurisdiction receives a complaint.

The Committee recommends against this approach for geoduck aquaculture as it is inadequate to meet the general principles of no net loss of ecological function and minimizing land use conflicts.

5. Document Other Approvals

Most Committee members recommend that local Shoreline Master Programs require geoduck aquaculture operations to obtain other approvals, for example certification that the growing area meets shellfish sanitation requirements or a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Some Committee members recommend that for this issue local jurisdictions treat geoduck aquaculture like they treat other shoreline uses.

Some Committee members recommend against this approach.

6. Posting a Bond

Most Committee members recommend against any special requirement that geoduck aquaculture operations post a bond.

One Committee member recommended that a bond should be posted that can be used for debris collection and to repair environmental damage assessed from the baseline study information.

Several Committee members recommend that local jurisdictions follow their general practice for when a bond should be required.

Other Recommendations

Ecology presented the Committee with some other changes it could make to the Guidelines. In response:

- Most Committee members recommend against adding many definitions to the Guidelines relating to geoduck aquaculture
- Most Committee members recommend against requiring local jurisdictions to collect and compile information on geoduck aquaculture activities and debris, with one member recommending the State compile information
- A couple of Committee members recommend including predator exclusion devices and growing pools to the section of the Guidelines addressing Shoreline Modifications.

References to Documents on Web Site

Committee members developed these recommendations at meetings held in August, September and October of 2008. The presentations and meeting notes are available on the Committee's pages on the Internet. A compilation of Committee comments was discussed on October and is also available.