

Thursday, April 10, 2008

Dear SARC Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a brief update on Washington Sea Grant's Geoduck Research Program. Completion of the initial contract process was been delayed slightly by efforts to integrate some projects within the research program. However, that process is now being completed and we hope that the integration will substantially improve the quality of the scientific results. We hope to have contracts for all projects finalized by April 17.

As you may recall, Washington Sea Grant received several applications in response to the request for scientific research projects to examine the effects of geoduck aquaculture on the Puget Sound environment. We submitted the applications to peer review, and convened a panel of scientific experts to develop recommendations for funding. The panel recommended that four of the projects be funded at the present time, and that two or three of the projects dealing with harvesting and planting operations be combined to develop a more integrated and comprehensive study. In mid-March, investigators from these studies met and developed a plan for an integrated study. The following week, they talked with growers and state agency representatives to identify potential research sites. In addition, discussions are underway to ensure that the third project uses the same techniques as the other two to allow comparison of results among sites and projects.

With respect to the six research priorities established in the legislation:

- The three projects discussed above will examine the environmental effects of structures and commercial harvesting and form the basis for the six-year comprehensive research program.

- A project to provide baseline information regarding naturally existing parasites and diseases in wild and cultured geoducks also will be funded as part of the program.

- In addition to the state-funded projects, Washington Sea Grant is funding work on geoduck genetics and NOAA is funding initial work on sterile triploids.

If you have questions or require additional information, please give WSG Associate Director, Raechel Waters, or me a call.

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