

PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

INDICATOR BIVALVE HARVEST FOR PERSONAL USE

This indicator tracks noncommercial bivalve harvest through an estimate of the number of people harvesting clams or oysters for personal use each year at a portion of public beaches in Puget Sound. Personal use is defined here to include harvest for recreation, food security, cultural and family heritage, as well as other personal and emotional experiences. The ability to harvest shellfish depends on the health of the resource, water quality, and access to publicly owned shellfish beds.

Indicator
Progress



Target
Status



Target

No targets are currently set for this indicator.

Data Source

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife estimated clam and oyster harvester-days from aerial surveys

Indicator Lead

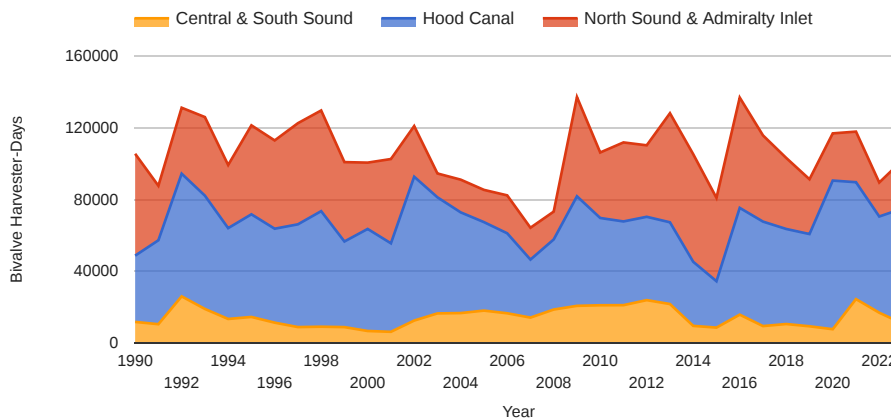
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Bivalve harvest for personal use

By: Puget Sound Region



Number of people harvesting bivalves (clams or oysters) for personal use each year at 34 public beaches across three Puget Sound regions: North Sound and Admiralty Inlet (12 beaches), Hood Canal (15 beaches), and Central and South Puget Sound (7 beaches).

Key Vital Sign Indicator Results

- The number of people harvesting clams and oysters for personal use at surveyed public beaches in Puget Sound varies year to year. Between 1990 and 2023 the highest number of harvesters was observed in 2009 and 2016 (nearly 137,000 people both years) and the lowest in 2007 (about 64,000 people).
- Most people harvest shellfish at beaches in the Hood Canal or North Sound and Admiralty Inlet regions.
- Many beaches in Central and South Sound experience sustained levels of pollution. Fewer beaches are open to harvest in this region, particularly along the highly populated shoreline between Tacoma and Everett where it is not safe to eat harvested shellfish. Officials often need to shorten the harvest season at the beaches in this region that are open to fishing due to health concerns.
- To ensure that access to shellfishing is relatively stable over time, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife closely monitor clam and oyster populations and will set harvest limits. That said, resource management is site-specific and the number of harvesters at a given beach will vary year to year depending on the health of the resource, access to the beach, water quality, and timing of low tides.
- Within a region, harvester-days and harvesting seasons vary by beach (see [Interpretation of Results and map](#)). Potlatch and Dosewallips State Parks in Hood Canal are two of the most popular shellfish beaches in Puget Sound. Birch Bay State Park in the North Sound is also popular, though subject to frequent biotoxin closures. Penrose Point State Park in the South Sound was closed to harvest in 2023 due to construction and maintenance at the park, but will open again in 2024.
- Port Gamble Tidelands in the Admiralty Inlet region opened for shellfish harvest in 2016. The Department of Ecology and the Port Gamble S'Klallam, Suquamish, and several other tribes, led cleanup efforts at this site to address contamination from a former mill property. The work resulted in a cleaner and healthier bay. Over 5,000 people harvested shellfish at Port Gamble in 2020.
- The Department of Health (DOH) regularly monitor water quality and test shellfish for biotoxins. DOH will close areas when shellfish are not safe to eat. Always check the [Washington Shellfish Safety Map](#) for beach closures and advisories on the day you plan to harvest shellfish.

CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE VITAL SIGNS VISIT: vitalsigns.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov OR CONTACT: vitalsigns@psp.wa.gov