

# PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

## INDICATOR AREA OF HARVESTABLE SHELLFISH BEDS

This indicator tracks changes in the classification of harvestable shellfish beds in Puget Sound. The Washington State Department of Health classifies 108 shellfish growing areas in Puget Sound to assure that harvested shellfish are safe to consume. The data collected for the classification process represent the conditions that dictate shellfish harvest and their trends provide information on marine water quality in Puget Sound.

Indicator  
Progress

Target  
Status



Target

Achieve a net gain of at least 500 acres approved for shellfish harvesting every year.

[Target fact sheet](#)

[Memo to Science Panel with rationale](#)

Data Source

Washington State Department of Health, Office of Environmental Health and Safety

[Shellfish Growing Area Annual Reports](#)

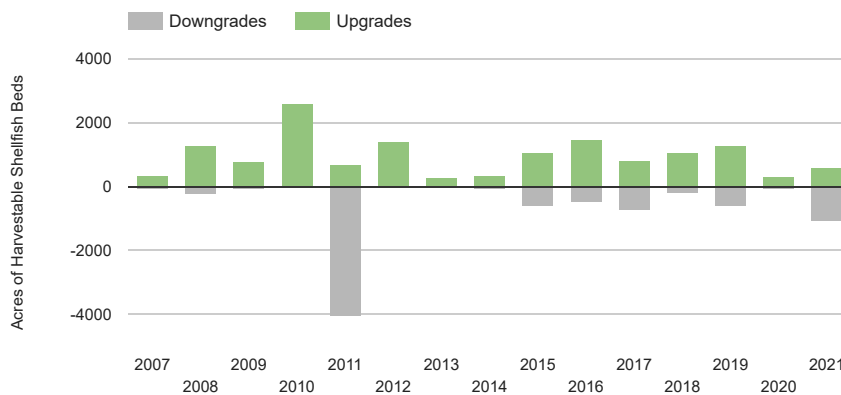
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Last Updated

5/20/2022

Area of harvestable shellfish beds  
By: Classification change



Area (acres) of harvestable shellfish beds where the Washington Department of Health classification has changed. Upgrades in classification mean that water quality has improved, allowing for fewer restrictions on shellfish harvest. Downgrades mean there are either more restrictions on when shellfish may be harvested or harvest is not allowed. Cumulative change in area since 2007 is shown by the blue line.

## Key Vital Sign Indicator Results

- Commercial shellfish growing areas in Puget Sound cover roughly 258,000 acres. About 86% (223,000 acres) of this area is suitable for harvest.
- In 2021 improved water quality conditions in four growing areas resulted in classification upgrades across 623 acres. Unfortunately, the Department of Health needed to downgrade classifications in four other growing areas. A total of 1,059 acres were downgraded resulting in more restrictions on shellfish harvest. The net change in harvestable shellfish beds for all of Puget Sound in 2021 was -436 acres. For more information, see the [Interpretation of Results](#) section.
- The 2020 recovery target identified a net increase from 2007 to 2020 of 10,800 harvestable shellfish acres. During this period there was a 6,659-acre net improvement to shellfish harvesting areas, which was below the 2020 target.
- The upgrades in growing area classifications since 2007 were dramatically offset by the 2011 downgrade of the Samish Bay shellfish growing area (4,037 acres). This downgrade impacted the overall net acreage gained and slowed progress toward the 2020 target.
- In 2022 the Leadership Council approved a new target to achieve a net gain of at least 500 acres approved for shellfish harvesting every year.

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