

Brinnon Area Water Quality Update

Quick Terms:

Fecal coliform = bacteria associated with the feces from warm-blooded animals. *E. coli* is one form of fecal coliform bacteria.

MPN/100mL = Most Probable Number (a statistical probability of the number of organisms) per 100ml; a measure of the amount of *E. coli* bacteria in a sample.

OSS = Onsite septic systems (permitted by Jefferson County Public Health)

O&M = operations and maintenance inspections of OSS (required every 1-3 years depending on OSS type)

Dealing with a Shellfish Downgrade: A Public Health Update

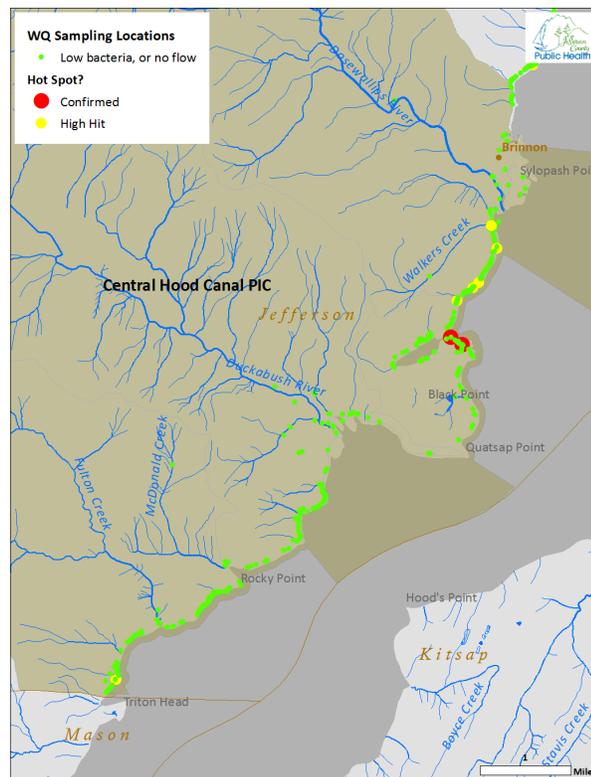
The Washington Department of Health routinely monitors the water quality in shellfish growing areas near the mouths of the Dosewallips, Duckabush, Black Point and Fulton Creek. In recent years there has been a summer-time increase of fecal coliform bacteria at the mouth of the Duckabush River. Bacteria counts climbed above levels allowed for shellfish harvest, and at the end of 2017, the Department decided it must close commercial and recreational shellfishing at the mouth of the Duckabush from May until the end of October until there is a consistent improvement in water quality. In addition, one of the monitoring stations near the mouth of the Dosewallips has been on an upward trend in its bacteria levels, but so far this hasn't reached the point where any closures are considered.

It is tough to see our formerly pristine waters and shellfishing areas decline due to fecal pollution. In 2017, Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH), through a grant from the Department of Ecology, initiated a project to identify and eliminate sources of contamination. JCPH staff will be working in the area for the next few years conducting river, shoreline, and marine water quality monitoring. We will also be going door-to-door near the rivers, streams and water drainages to talk to community residents septic system maintenance. We will provide financial and informational resources for anyone who has problems with managing wastewater on their property.

Update on Monitoring Results for Winter 2017/2018

Water quality sampling from November 2017 to April 2018 along streams and shorelines in the Brinnon area (south of Seal Rock to the Mason County border) have shown that levels of fecal bacteria are generally low in southern Jefferson County during the wet season. All the river samples have been well below state limits for bacteria and only eight shoreline sites have shown high levels (where *E. coli* results are 100 MPN/100 mL or more). These include: four along the Dosewallips drainage, three in Black Point and one in Fulton Creek. Of these eight, two on Black Point were confirmed Hot Spots with results of over 1000 MPN/100 mL (See Map). We'll investigate these and continuing the monitoring this summer. The important test of water quality in the area will be what results we get from the summer monitoring season.

You can learn more about this project or sign up for Water Quality updates by visiting the Jefferson County Public Health Website www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org. To contact Anna Bachmann, the team lead on the Project in the Brinnon Area, call (360) 379-4482 or email abachmann@co.jefferson.wa.us.



Some Important Statistics

Potential bacteria sources: **humans & wildlife**
 Number of humans living in the area: **803 (as of 2000 census, does not include vacation residents)**
 Number of Elk and Seals: **over 170 Elk (last count in 2017) and 225 to 350 seals (based on haul out counts in 2014)**
 # of OSS in the area: **1224**
 Average OSS lifespan: **up to 30 yrs**
 OSS in area over 30 yrs old: **over 42%**
 O&Ms required: **every 1-3 yrs**
 Systems current on O&M county-wide: **19%**

Protecting human health & shellfish beds

www.rd.usda.gov/wa

(360) 452-8994 or



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) also offers grant and low-interest loan programs to assist homeowners with installing or replacing septic systems.

www.craft3.org

(888) 231-2170 or



Need help paying for repairs?
Low interest loans are available in Jefferson County. **Craft3** is a non-profit organization that offers Clean Water Loans to help families repair or replace their failing septic system with no money down.

Water Quality
Jefferson County Public Health
615 Sheridan Street
Port Townsend, WA 98368

How can you protect water quality this summer?

Development along the rivers has reached a level where we all need to take a closer look at how we are dealing with wastewater in our communities. Some issues to be aware of are:

- Outhouses, which are no longer permitted under Jefferson County Code, may need to be decommissioned depending upon site conditions and county policy.
- Any plumbed sinks, showers and/or washing machines that discharge greywater (wastewater that doesn't include wastewater from toilets) to the surface of the ground or into a dry well will need to be removed or plumbed to a permitted septic system.
- Sanicans, which are allowed for temporary use only, must be emptied regularly by a certified septic pumper (and owners should keep receipts).
- Internal holding tanks in an RV are ok if taken to a dump station regularly but external holding tanks for wastewater will need to be replaced by a permitted septic system.
- "Bootlegged" septic systems, those installed since 1970 without a permit, will need to get evaluated and potentially brought up to code through the permitting process.
- Septic systems need to be regularly inspected either by an authorized homeowner or a certified Septic Operations and Maintenance Specialist. Visit www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org for details.



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www.JeffersonCountyPublicHealth.org

