



# The Skokomish needs your help!



Water quality studies in the Skokomish watershed have found too much bacteria. People who swim or fish could get sick, and shellfish harvests in downstream Annas Bay are threatened.

A water quality workgroup has drafted a plan for reducing bacteria. The workgroup included valley residents plus representatives of the Skokomish Tribe, commercial shellfish growers, and local and state agencies. Now we'd like to know what you think of the plan.

## Public comment period:

January 6 through February 14, 2003

## Open house and public meeting:

Tuesday, January 28, 6:30-8 p.m.  
Hood Canal School Cafeteria

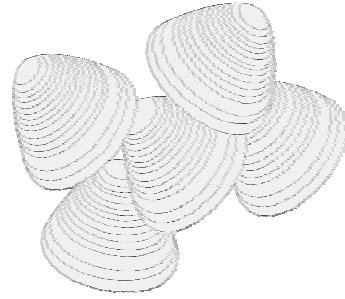
## What's the problem?

The Department of Ecology conducted a water quality study during 2000. The study found too much fecal coliform bacteria in the lower watershed. These bacteria are found in the feces of warm-blooded animals such as humans, livestock, pets, and wildlife. Typical human-related sources are livestock management practices, septic systems, and pet waste.

## A plan has been drafted to reduce bacteria

*The Skokomish Watershed Detailed Implementation Plan for Fecal Coliform Bacteria* encourages residents throughout the watershed to help by:

- ◆ Keeping livestock out of streams. This is the biggest source of bacteria in the watershed.
- ◆ Maintaining the vegetation along streams. It helps filter water flowing over the surface under normal rain conditions before it reaches streams. During floods, vegetation reduces bank erosion.
- ◆ Applying manure to fields at rates and times that allow plants to use the nutrients rather than losing nutrients to rain water or floods.
- ◆ Storing manure in a manner that protects it from being carried into streams by rain water or floods.
- ◆ Pumping and inspecting your septic system regularly and getting it fixed when needed. Problems may not be evident in daily use, and maintenance is less expensive than replacement.
- ◆ Encouraging others who camp or fish on your land to bury their waste at least six inches deep and well back from streams.



**Fecal coliform bacteria** are found in the waste of warm-blooded animals, including humans, livestock, and wildlife. When fecal coliform bacteria concentrations increase, other bacteria and viruses also found in feces may be increasing as well.

People can be exposed to bacteria or viruses if they swallow polluted water, get it in small cuts, or eat shellfish that are taken from it. Possible human health effects range from earaches and rashes to more serious illnesses such as hepatitis and salmonella.

The plan notes the work that has been done since the water quality study in 2000. That includes installing thousands of feet of streamside fencing and plants, property buy-outs in frequently flooded areas, and shutting down some high-risk septic systems.

For additional cleanup, the plan first focuses on obvious sources of bacteria in areas that were contributing the largest amounts of bacteria at the time of the study. Those areas are Weaver and Ten Acre Creeks, and the Skokomish River and Purdy Creek between the bridges for Highways 101 and 106.

In general, the plan is based on letting area residents know about the bacteria problem and things they can do to help. It encourages people to help by providing, where possible, technical and financial assistance. And it identifies changes in the programs of responsible agencies that will help improve and sustain water quality.

If these actions aren't enough to achieve good water quality, we'll look at improvements throughout the watershed and consider other methods of reducing sources. Meanwhile we'll continue monitoring the water quality to identify sources and evaluate progress.

Finally, if these voluntary actions aren't enough to achieve good water quality, the plan also acknowledges that under Washington law (RCW 90.48) it is illegal to pollute the waters of the state. It's Ecology's responsibility to enforce that law if required to do so in order to meet water quality standards.

### *We want to know what you think*

At the open house and public meeting on January 28 workgroup members will be available to answer your questions and hear your ideas and comments. We'll have information on things you can do to help. And we'll provide a short presentation describing the plan.

*The Draft Skokomish Watershed Detailed Implementation Plan* is available for review at:

- Purdy Canyon Restaurant, 16671 N. US Highway 101, Shelton (after January 10).
- The Hoodspout Timberland Library, N. 40 Schoolhouse Hill Road, Hoodspout.
- The Skokomish Tribal Center, N. 80 Tribal Center Road, Shelton.
- On the Internet at [www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/02-10-072.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/02-10-072.html)

Please send comments by February 14 to:

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*If you have special accommodation needs, please call (360) 407-6300. The TTY number is 711 or 1-800-833-6388.*