



www.piercecountywa.org/shellfish

WORKING TO IDENTIFY, CORRECT AND PREVENT WATER POLLUTION

Help Puget Sound! Report water pollution (253) 798-4274 or (360) 407-6300

Photo courtesy Jim Bellamy

Key Peninsula 2018/19 Water Quality Report

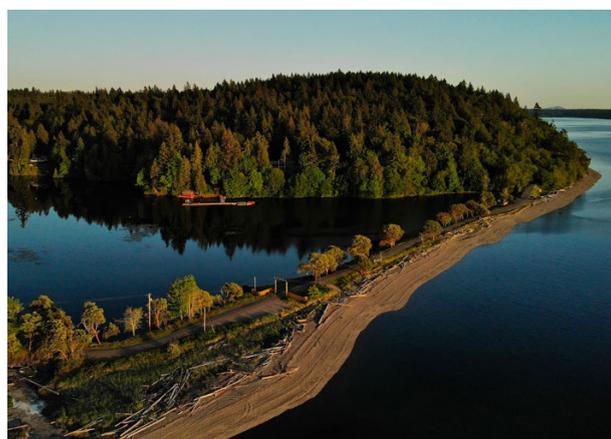


Photo courtesy Chris Konieczny/KP News



Photo: Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department



Photo courtesy Kyle Lawson

Whiteman Creek Cleans Up!

Working in cooperation with a homeowner, Pierce County and Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department recently fixed a bacteria problem in Whiteman Cove. Every month, Surface Water Management (SWM) staff collect water quality samples for evaluation. When they saw repeated high fecal coliform bacteria levels, they notified the county's Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination team for investigation. The team analyzed past water quality sampling results and used the county's advanced computer mapping program to identify locations for additional sampling. They bracketed locations with high bacteria until they narrowed the source down to one single house on the creek, upstream from YMCA Camp Colman. SWM asked Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to contact the resident to have their septic system tested. The homeowner agreed to a dye test and promptly repaired his system when he realized it was the source of a potentially serious water quality problem.

Shoreline Surveys

You may wonder why the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department walks the shoreline in Key Peninsula. They're working with Pierce County and the state Department of Health to find pollution impacting Puget Sound, pollution that can make you and your family sick when you play in the water or eat fish and shellfish from Puget Sound. Recently, the Health Department worked with a homeowner who didn't realize that it is not OK to have water from their clothes washer and sink drain onto the ground. Even if it doesn't come from a toilet, any water from your home can have pollutants like detergents and bacteria that should go to your septic system for treatment. Not sure if your system is working right? Call a private, licensed septic professional for an inspection to see if your system needs service or repair. Most systems should be inspected every 3 years for the longest possible life. Visit us at the KP Community Office in Key Center or www.tpchd.org/healthy-homes/septic-systems for a list of resources.

Celebrating 70 Years

The Pierce Conservation District (PCD) was formed in 1949 to work with local landowners to conserve natural resources and implement first-rate farming practices. Since then, PCD farm planners have become a key part of the Key Peninsula farming community. Paul Borne, has already hosted multiple workshops on the peninsula and is working with many farm owners to plan and implement Best Management Practices. Even better, his services and decades of expertise are free of charge. "Implementing best management practices is a win-win-win scenario – these conservation methods can be good for animal health, good for the environment, and good for your wallet." As we enter fall, Paul is encouraging landowners to think about mud prevention. "If you have a farm and livestock, I can show you methods to manage mud and improve chore efficiency," he says. Whether you want to protect your resources, have healthier animals, or improve your farm, start by contacting Paul Borne at paulb@piercecd.org.



2018/19 Water Quality Report

What YOU Can Do to Improve Water Quality

- + Get your septic system inspected and pumped if needed
- + Scoop pet waste and dispose of it into the garbage
- + Collect, cover and compost livestock manure or use a disposal service
- + Do not feed wildlife. Secure pet food, garbage, and compost from wildlife
- + Practice natural yard care and use less fertilizer and no pesticides
- + Don't dump yard clippings on the beach — compost or use yard waste collection instead
- + Help monitor: Stream Team and Algae Watch programs need volunteers.

About This Report

There are several agencies working together to assess and improve water quality on the Key Peninsula, collectively known as the Clean Water Partners. This report provides a summary of current water quality and conditions, and the activities underway to improve and



Grading Shellfish Growing Areas

These grades are based on marine water quality samples collected by the Washington State Department of Health, linked to standards set by the National Shellfish Sanitation Program. The concentration of fecal coliform bacteria in WDOH's 30 most-recent samples must not exceed certain limits. The higher the bacteria levels, the worse the grade. Bays with sites that exceed the limits are given an F or failing grade. Note: Very few of the samples used to assign these grades were taken during rain events and grades usually decline with more rain. For more information about WDOH's program, visit www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Shellfish

Stream Water Quality Trends

The trend symbols indicate whether Pierce County's monthly sampling results indicate a change from the 2017 Water Quality Report.

IMPROVING

DECLINING

+ Dutchers Creek

+ Minter Creek

- Little Minter Creek

- School House Creek (AI)

protect our lakes, streams and salt water beaches. If you have comments or questions about this report, please let us know.

Pierce County Surface Water Management
www.piercecounty-wa.org/shellish
 (253) 798-2725

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
www.tpchd.org
 (253) 798-6470

Pierce Conservation District
www.pierccd.org
 (253) 845-9770

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Photo: Stream Team



How You Can Help Monitor Water Quality



Stream Team monitor training



Harbor WildWatch beach monitoring



Bay Lake

Stream Team

The Pierce Conservation District Stream Team monitors water quality and the biological condition of local streams. In partnership with Pierce County Surface Water Management, Stream Team staff and volunteers collect benthic macroinvertebrates (insects, larva, snails and worms) to help determine stream health. The types of animals found tells a lot about the health of a stream — some tolerate pollution, while others are sensitive. The Benthic Index of Biotic Integrity (BIBI) score helps inform the overall watershed report card. This summer, macroinvertebrate sampling was conducted on Crescent, Rocky, and Vaughn creeks in the Key Peninsula-Gig Harbor-Islands (KGI) watershed. They've seen some beautiful habitats, lots of bugs, and look forward to more sampling. If you are interested in joining Stream Team to make a difference in the KGI watershed, contact Belinda Paterno at belindap@pierced.org

Community Science Experience

Citizens around the world help the scientific community collect meaningful data to learn about and help protect the environment. In 2013, Harbor WildWatch created a community science program to record the marine organisms living in the Key and Gig Harbor beaches, estuaries, and creeks. Twice a year, trained volunteers collect data at Key Peninsula beaches: Maple Hollow, Penrose Point State Park, and Purdy Sand Spit. This information tracks how beaches change over time and can help predict the impact of future events, whether they are natural or human induced. Monitoring helps establish a baseline understanding of the animals and algae living on the beach. You don't have to be a scientist to take part in beach monitoring and all ages are welcome. For questions about Harbor WildWatch's Community Science Experience, contact Science Specialist, Stena Troyer at stena@harborwildwatch.org

TOXIC ALGAE

When in doubt, stay out!



Toxic algae blooms happen in this lake.

Toxic algae, also called cyanobacteria, can make you very sick. Algae blooms can look like scum, streaks or clumps in the water.

Help track toxic algae.

Visit tpchd.org/toxicalgae or call (253) 798-6470.

Keep your family and pets safe!



Algae Watch Volunteers

Toxic algae move freely in lakes so it can be tough for Health Department staff to spot problems as soon as they happen. They encourage waterfront

property owners and frequent lake visitors to sign up to be Algae Watch volunteers. You will learn how to identify toxic algae and your information may be used to notify the public when there is a potential public health threat. Join other local lake enthusiasts and learn more about your lake. Email ltuttle@tpchd.org to sign up!