

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**September 11, 2012**

**MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**411 NORTH 5<sup>TH</sup> ST**  
**SHELTON, WA 98584**

TO: KMAS, KRXY, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN, SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE SUN

RE: **Oakland Bay Clean Water District wins National and State awards;  
Improved water quality leads to shellfish upgrades**

Many good things are happening in Mason County's Oakland Bay. In July, the 23 members/organizations that make up the Oakland Bay Clean Water District Advisory Committee were honored when Mason County Public Health & Human Services was awarded a model practice award from the National Association of County and City Health Officials at their conference in Los Angeles.

In August the Oakland Bay Clean Water District Advisory Committee's Education Subcommittee received a Puget Sound Champion award as a result of a nomination through the Alliance for a Healthy South Sound for excellence in restoration, water quality improvement, and outreach. The grass roots efforts by the education subcommittee include many projects including workshops, training, technical assistance and the very popular "Earth Day on Oakland Bay".

On September 5th 750 acres of shellfish growing beds were upgraded from "conditionally approved" to "approved" by the Washington State Department of Health. The upgrade was made possible due to improvements/upgrades to the Shelton Wastewater Treatment Plant and successful collaboration of shellfish growers and property owners working to reduce impact on shellfish harvest areas. Property owners are instituting best management practices for animal keeping, performing operation & maintenance on their onsite septic systems, and controlling stormwater runoff to name a few of the proactive efforts that have made a positive difference to the water quality in Oakland Bay.

**Model Practice award:** Mason County Public Health & Human Services was honored at the 2012 annual conference of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), a body of peers, for developing and implementing a program that demonstrates exemplary and replicable qualities in response to a local public health need. The "Clean Water District Model (Water Quality)" Oakland Bay, Mason County, Washington was one of 39 public health programs developed by a local health department that was peer-reviewed and selected from 166 applications from across the nation to receive NACCHO's Model Practice Award.

The Model Practice Awards program honors initiatives that demonstrate how local health departments and their community partners can effectively collaborate to address local public health concerns. "We are proud to receive NACCHO's Model Practice Award. The award is evidence of our commitment to developing responsive and innovative public health programs that improve the health and well being of local residents," said Commissioner Lynda Ring Erickson.

The Oakland Bay Clean Water District Model is now part of an online, searchable database of successful public health practices. The NACCHO Model Practice database allows users to benefit from colleagues' experiences, to learn what works, and to ensure that resources are used wisely on effective programs that have been implemented with good results. It also enables NACCHO to share information with key stakeholders and media about the good work being done by local health departments across the country.

This award puts Mason County Public Health & Human Services and the Oakland Bay Clean Water Advisory Committee into special company—a select group working together to exemplify a forward thinking, proactive attitude toward protecting and promoting the health of communities across the nation.

**Puget Sound Champions award:** The Oakland Bay Clean Water District Advisory Committee's Education Subcommittee was honored with the Puget Sound Champion award during the Alliance of a Healthy South Sound's regular Council meeting on August 29, 2012. The award is intended to recognize significant local efforts that have contributed to Puget Sound Recovery. As a recipient of the first Puget Sound Champion recognition, the partners in the South Sound Action Area of Puget Sound are being recognized for a demonstration of local efforts that have contributed to excellence in restoration, water quality improvement and outreach. When he notified the group of the award Tristan Peter-Contesse of the Puget Sound Partnership said "I've certainly heard a lot of good news coming from Oakland Bay recently, and am really pleased to see your contributions to that good news acknowledged."

**Shellfish Growing Area upgrade:** Before this 750 acre upgrade, the central part of Oakland Bay was closed after heavy rainfall or when there were problems at the wastewater treatment plant. In 2007 water quality had declined and a Shellfish Protection District was formed to address the water quality issues. The original Shellfish Protection District was made up of a unique group of people who wanted to take a holistic approach to improving water quality in Oakland Bay and the protection district grew into the Oakland Bay Clean Water Advisory Committee.

The work of this group has resulted in a greater knowledge of the potential pollution sources in the Oakland Bay area, greater citizen involvement in protecting the water quality of the Bay, and improved water quality. One of the partners in the Oakland Bay Clean Water District is the City of Shelton. The City's upgrades to the sewer system were integral in the change of classification in the 750 acres from "conditionally approved" to "approved".

"I have been a part of groups where most everyone brings something to the table. Until the Oakland Bay Clean Water Advisory committee, I had never been associated with a group where everyone brings so much to the table. It has been an amazing experience." said Debbie Riley, Environmental Health Manager, Mason County Public Health.

For more information call Mason County Public Health at (360) 427-9670 EXT 400 or from Belfair (360) 275-4467 EXT 400. You may also contact Debbie Riley at [DLR@co.mason.wa.us](mailto:DLR@co.mason.wa.us)

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Lynda Ring Erickson  
Chair

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Steve Bloomfield  
Commissioner

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Tim Sheldon  
Commissioner