



Willapa Bay Field Station
PO Box 190 • Ocean Park, Washington 98640 • (360) 665-4166 FAX (360) 666-6716

May 4, 2009

Dear Commercial Razor Clam Digger:

A commercial season for razor clam digging has been approved by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for 2009. **The commercial razor clam season will begin Monday, May 11, 2009** with the final ending date to be determined. WDFW will announce the end-date when WDFW and DNR have completed the formal Right of Entry Agreement. Commercial harvest will only be allowed on the detached Willapa Spits.

Biotoxin samples taken on April 23 and April 30 tested below the action level. The Washington State Department of Health (WDOH) will test for biotoxin levels during the fishery. For to up-to-date information regarding sampling and test results check the **commercial razor clam “hotline”**: (360) 249- 4628 ext. 262.

Any increase in biotoxins over established action levels will mean a postponement or cancellation of the fishery and may mean a product recall. Please call the hotline before digging to determine the status of the fishery.

In order to participate in the 2009 fishery, you will need item #1 below if you work for a WDOH certified company. To be able to purchase clams (either an as individual or company) all three items listed must be obtained.

1. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Commercial Razor Clam License. Each person applying for a commercial razor clam license must complete and sign an application. The fees are \$130 for Washington state residents or \$185 for non-residents. License applications are available at: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/commercial/forms/razorclm.pdf>.
2. WDOH Shellfish License and Certification and Inspection of your operation. Contact Jerry Borchert (360) 236-3328 for an application and Plan of Operation Questionnaire if you or your company plans to be licensed and certified by WDOH.
3. WDFW Wholesale Dealer's License. Contact WDFW Licensing (360) 902-2464 if you plan to buy clams and do not have a Wholesale Dealer's License. Only licensed wholesale dealers can purchase clams.

Mandatory Digger Registration

All diggers are required to register with a certified razor clam dealer to participate in the fishery. To register, diggers should contact a dealer certified by the Department of Health (WDOH) and arrange to be included on the dealer's list of registered diggers. Diggers may register with no more than two dealers at any one time. Once a dealer(s) has agreed to register you with their company, they will submit your name to the Department of Health. WDOH will then forward registered digger names to Licensing at WDFW. **Licensing will only sell commercial razor clam licenses to those individuals whose names appear on the WDOH list of registered diggers.** If you apply by mail, your license will not be issued until your name has been received from WDOH. If you plan to purchase a license in person, call WDFW Licensing at (360) 902-2464 first to confirm that WDOH has provided Licensing your name.

Plan of Operations – Digger List

Companies may add diggers to their Plan of Operation during the season but WDFW will not issue licenses until an updated list is provided by WDOH. Diggers may change companies during season but must follow the same steps described above. The list of diggers for each company will be provided to WDFW Enforcement and dealers may be held responsible for digger compliance with all appropriate rules. Citations can be issued for violations of either WDFW or WDOH regulations.

Fish Tickets and “Take Home”

Wholesale dealers must complete a fish ticket for *all* commercially harvested razor clams (WAC 220-69-240 or WAC 220-69-241) whether clams are sold, kept by the digger for crab bait, or intended for personal use (WAC 220-20-026). Personal use is limited to one recreational limit (15 clams) per day per digger and must be recorded in the “Take Home” section of the fish receiving ticket (WAC 220-20-026).

License Requirements

Diggers must carry their commercial license on their person while harvesting and while in possession of clams. Unlicensed persons are not permitted to assist with harvesting operations. Diggers should remember that a license is required to “take, dig for or possess” razor clams. Unlicensed digging is not only unfair; it is inconsistent with the policy that fisheries be conducted in an orderly manner. The minimum age for licensing in the commercial razor clam fishery is 16 years.

Transport Tickets

If you intend to sell clams at some location other than the point of landing a “transport ticket” must be filled out and kept with the clams until the point of sale. Transport tickets are available through WDFW Licensing at Olympia; a limited supply is available at the Region 6 office at Montesano.

Refunding License Fee

Please note that license fees cannot be refunded once the commercial razor clam season has been opened (even if only for a few hours or days). If elevated biotoxin levels force an early closure of the fishery, reasonable effort will be made to continue sampling biotoxin levels to determine when or if the fishery can resume.

Public Meeting – 2008 Annual Report

A public meeting was held March 25, 2009 at Raymond to discuss potential opening dates for the 2009 commercial season. Other topics covered included a review of the 2008 season, and the need again to post a boundary between the Willapa spits and Leadbetter Point. The 2008 report and general information about the commercial razor clam fishery can be found at www.wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shellfish/razorclam/comm/index.htm.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need assistance. My phone number is (360) 665-4166. You may also call the hotline at (360) 249-4628 ext. 262.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce E. Kauffman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bruce Kauffman

Coastal Shellfish Biologist

cc: Dan Ayres, WDFW, Coastal Shellfish Lead Biologist
Carol Stedman, WDFW Licensing
Jerry Borchert, Washington Department of Health, Biotxin Coordinator
WDFW Enforcement