

Working Together to Achieve Sustainable Water Resources

Many Mason County organizations are committed to preserving and improving this precious resource. Learn more about their mission and current activities. All offer opportunities and welcome citizen involvement.

Mason County: Departments of Health, Public Works, Utilities/Waste Management (www.co.mason.wa.us)

City of Shelton: Department of Public Works (www.ci.shelton.wa.us)

Skokomish Indian Tribe (www.skokomish.org)

Squaxin Island Tribe (www.squaxintribe.org)

Mason Conservation District (www.olywa.net/mcd/index.html)

Washington Cooperative Extension (<http://mason.wsu.edu>)

University of Washington Sea Grant Program (www.wsg.washington.edu)

Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIA) 14, 15 & 16 (www.ecy.wa.gov/watersher/index.html)

WA Department of Ecology (www.ecy.wa.gov)

Puget Sound Action Team (www.psat.wa.gov)

Hood Canal Coordinating Council (www.hccc.cog.wa.us)

WA Department of Health - Shellfish (www.doh.wa.gov)

Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (www.hcseg.com)

Allyn Salmon Enhancement Group (www.hcseg.com)

South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group (www.spsseg.org)

South West Puget Sound Water Council (www.wpswc.org)

Lower Hood Canal Watershed Implementation Council (www.pcsqa.org)

Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association and its members (www.pcsqa.org)

Simpson Timber (www.simpson.com)

Students and teachers in Shelton, North Mason, Hood Canal, Pioneer and Matlock School Districts

Acknowledgments:

Project developed by Mason Matters Water Resources Work Group (members from above listed organizations).

Report funded by Mason Matters.

"Our Legacy" by Carolyn Maddox.

Bishop family photo by David Parry.

Cover photo and report design by Pam Merrill, Outlook Writing & Design.

For further details, please visit our website at www.masonmatters.org.

Challenge #1: Wastewater Management

The majority of Mason County households rely on on-site septic systems to manage their wastewater per day. Eventually, all this wastewater flows into some natural water systems — our streams, lakes, drinking water aquifers or Puget Sound. Failing septic systems are a major source of disease-causing organisms.

ACTIONS:

1. Have your septic tank inspected every 3-5 years; pump as needed.
2. Keep livestock away from streams and wetlands.
3. Keep pet waste away from streams, riparian areas and paved areas. Pick up pet waste and place in trash.

FINDING HELP:

1. Septic System Education — WSU Cooperative Extension (427-9670 or 275-4467, ext. 396)
2. Realtor's Education: On-site Systems — WSU Cooperative Extension (427-9670, ext. 396)
3. Best Practices Farm Plans — Mason Conservation District (427-9436)
4. Drinking Water Testing — Mason County Environmental Health (427-9670 ext. 293)
5. Water Pollution Complaints & Information — Water Resource Protection (427-9670 ext. 544)

Challenge #2: Stormwater Management

Natural environments such as forests and fields allow rainfall to soak into the ground, eventually seeping into streams, lakes and underground aquifers. However, on developed land and paved areas, rainfall runs over the surface of the ground, often picking up pollutants like animal wastes, oil, fertilizers and pesticides. An average residence in a rural setting has 4,200 square feet of surfaces like roofs and driveways that encourage run-off.

ACTIONS:

1. Understand your property's natural drainage, soil and vegetation.
2. Protect and replant native vegetation.
3. Surface your driveway and sidewalks with porous materials, such as sand or gravel.
4. Minimize the use of fertilizers and pesticides.
5. Remove pet waste from impermeable surfaces.

FINDING HELP:

1. Master Gardener Best Practices — WSU Cooperative Extension (427-9670 ext. 396)
2. Pesticide Applicator Training — WSU Cooperative Extension (427-9670 ext. 396)
3. Listen to KMA5 1030 AM for "Water Quality" Radio Spots
4. Low Impact Development — PSAT (www.psat.wa.gov)

Our Water Resources: Our Legacy

Raindrops spatter on oilskins, lamps hiss, rubber boots crunch on barnacles and rocks. Oyster pickers fork Little Skookum Inlet shellfish into steel baskets, while on Oakland Bay, diggers on hands and knees wrest clams from the beach with hand tools.

The scene could be this week or 125 years ago. The only difference: overharvesting and industry long since decimated the native Olympia oyster; now the Pacific oyster is the area's economic mainstay, and the native littleneck steamer is second to the more easily reared Manila clam. But oystermen and clamdiggers still work low tides whenever they come, in rain or freezing wind, or in scorching sun. By a quirk of nature called diurnal inequality, the lowest tides are late at night in the winter and at hot midday in summer.

Pioneer oystermen reportedly shipped their first sales from the Kamilche Post Office in 1878. The industry grew rapidly. Some harvesters lived on floathouses easily moved from oyster bed to oyster bed. Local oysters went by rowboat and steamboat to restaurants in the capital city (said to have been sited in Olympia for its proximity to oyster beds) and off by ship to feed the rich in San Francisco. By 1887, even with diking to enhance tidelands, some local beaches were depleted. The Puget Sound Oyster Association was formed for replanting. In 1902, when local harvesters sold more than 20,000 sacks of oysters a year, rich seed grounds were set aside by the Mason County Board of Oyster Land Commissioners.



Sixth generation of Mason County shellfish growers: Jeremiah Bishop with father and grandfather.

Shortly after Washington became a state, the Callow Act enabled oystermen who cultivated oysters on tidelands to apply for ownership, an unusual situation but one credited with stabilizing the industry. And a stable economic presence it has been. Early oystermen included S. K. Taylor, whose descendants operate Taylor Shellfish, the county's eighth-largest employer. Three hundred people harvest and retail clams, oysters and mussels for that firm alone.

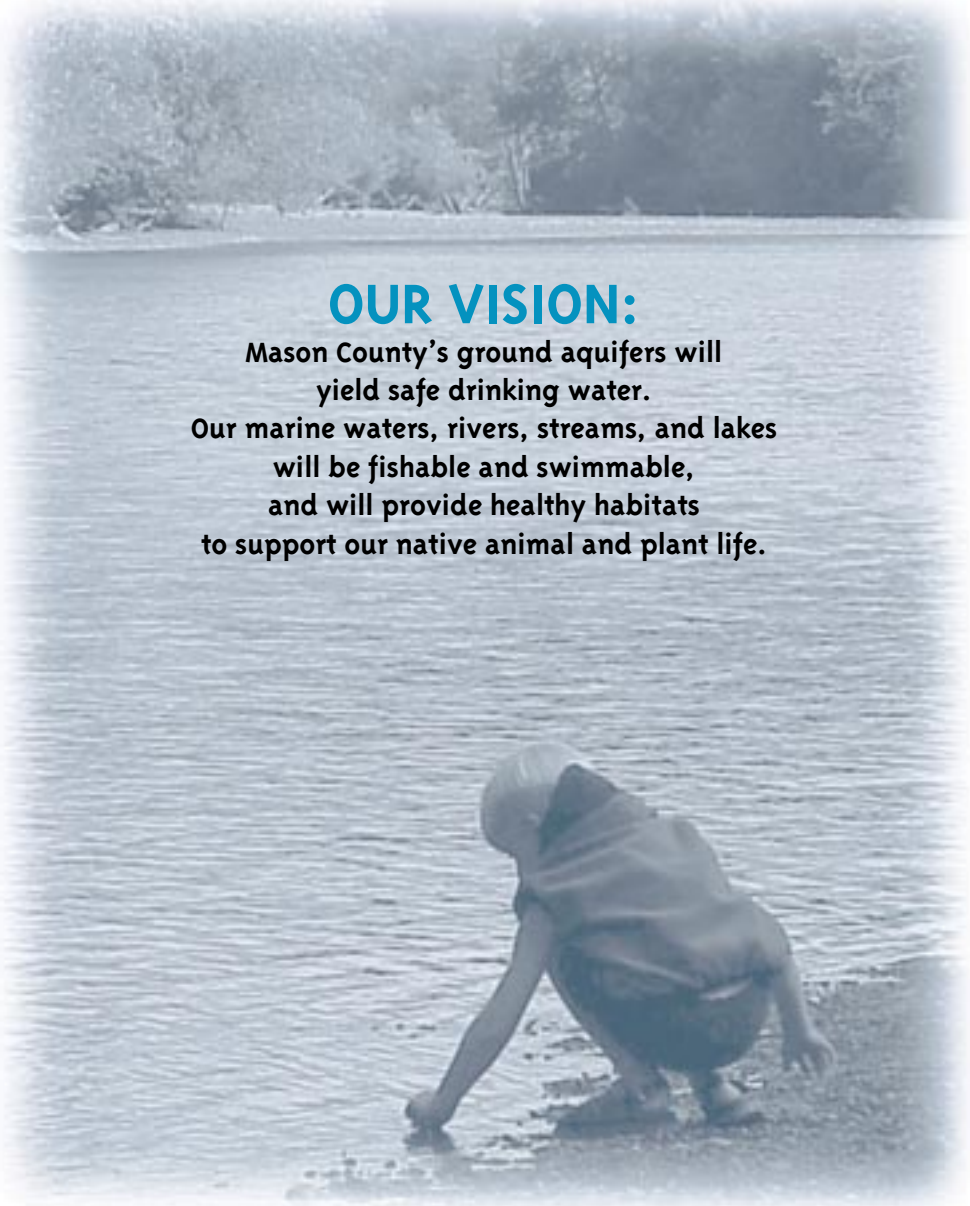
Other shellfish firms remain in family ownership. Little Skookum Shellfish Company's Frank Bishop sees in his grandson the fifth generation of pioneer oysterman Dan Lynch's family. He hopes water quality, the linchpin of the industry, will allow the youngster to spend his life in the industry his forebears have enjoyed.

A pulp mill's effect on Oakland Bay all but extincted the native oyster in the 1930s. Now, a multimillion-dollar shellfish industry depends on healthy septic systems and controlled runoff.

Water quality, after all, benefits everyone.

WATER: A Precious Resource

Report on the Health of Mason County's Water Resources - 2003



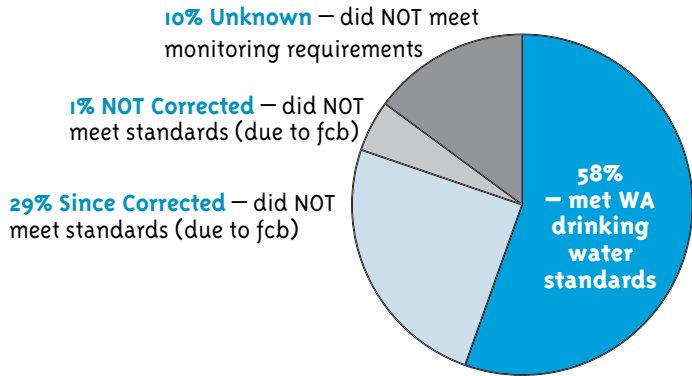
OUR VISION:

Mason County's ground aquifers will yield safe drinking water. Our marine waters, rivers, streams, and lakes will be fishable and swimmable, and will provide healthy habitats to support our native animal and plant life.

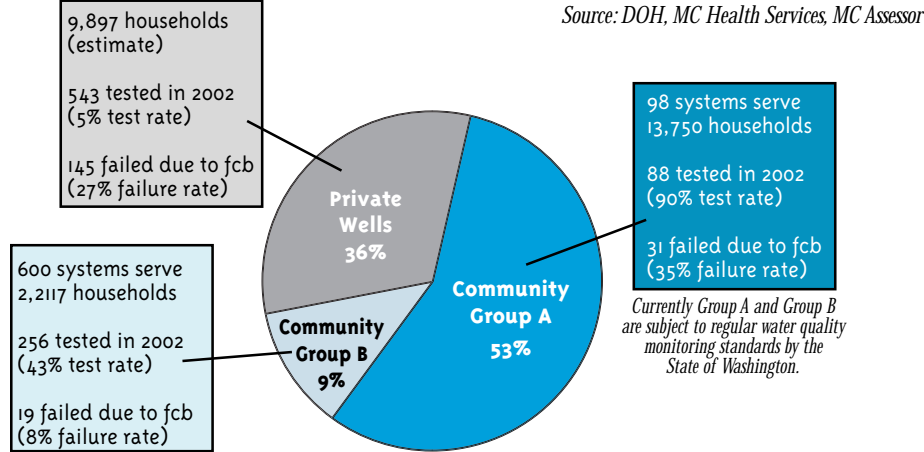
GOAL 1: Freshwater Resources for Safe Drinking Water

The primary threat to our drinking water is disease-causing organisms, usually indicated by levels of coliform bacteria. If disease-causing organisms such as fecal coliform bacteria (fcb) are found in your drinking water, you and your family may be at risk for physical illnesses. Secondary threats to our drinking water include heavy metals, nitrates and saltwater intrusions.

Drinking Water Status for Mason County (2002) for Community Group A* water systems
(*more than 25 connections to homes and required by law to do annual testing)



Known Sources of Drinking Water for Mason County Households and Testing Results (2002)



Community Goal: Increase the number of households in Mason County testing the quality of their drinking water on a regular basis.

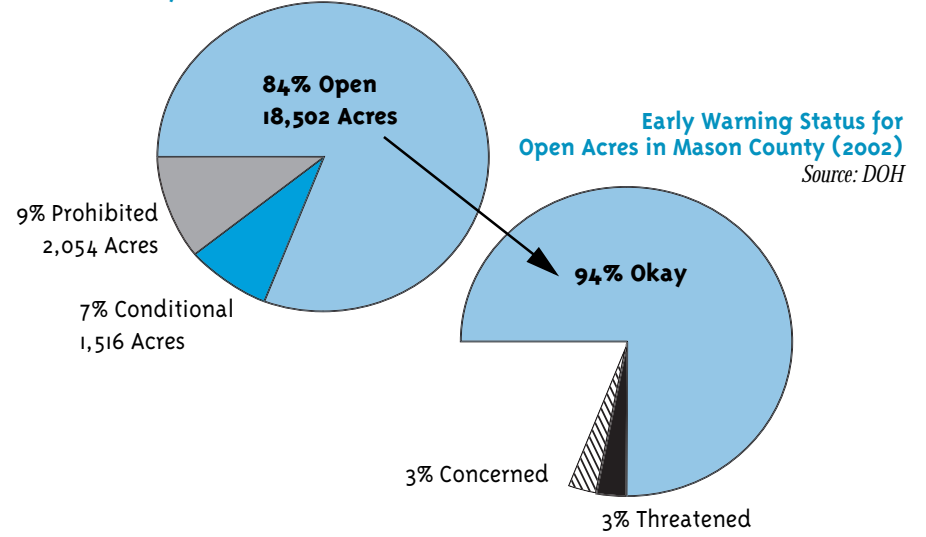
Citizen Role: Know your source of water and request water monitoring results. If on a private well, start a regular well-monitoring program.

Questions? Call (360)427-9670, ext. 293.

GOAL 2: Marine Water Resources for a Healthy Economy

One of the largest threats to the health of our local marine waters is failing septic systems. Biological contaminants such as **E. coli bacteria** can escape from failing septic systems and are concentrated in local shellfish growing areas. The filter-feeding shellfish store these contaminants and people who eat contaminated shellfish are at risk for physical illness.

Commercial Shellfish Harvest Areas Status for Mason County (2002)



Q: What is the value of Mason County's commercial shellfish industry?

A: \$32,200,000

This includes **120 commercial shellfish licenses** that produce **534 direct full-time jobs**

and generate **\$17,700,000 in payroll for Mason County.**

Source: Economic Development Council of Mason County

Community Goal: Increase the number of acres available for recreational and commercial shellfish harvesting in Mason County.

Citizen Role: Commit to a regular maintenance program for your septic system.

GOAL 3: River and Streams for A Healthy Community

One of the biggest threats to the health of our rivers and streams is manure and other forms of animal waste. High levels of organic matter act as fertilizer and speed up the growth of aquatic plants. With more aquatic plants, there are increases in water temperature, changes in pH levels and less available oxygen in the water. These changes in water conditions contribute to the death of fish and other aquatic animals. The Clean Water Act 303(d) listing identifies waters that do not meet state water quality standards. The following bodies of water are on the 303 (d) listing:

SMALL BODIES OF WATER

Anderson Creek (uninhabitable for fish)
Campbell Creek (fcb, oxygen, pH)
Goldsborough Creek (fcb)
Kennedy Creek (pH)
Purdy Creek (fcb)
Rabbit Creek (temperature)
Shelton Creek (fcb)
Shoofly Creek (fcb)
Skookum Creek (fcb)
Stimson Creek (fcb)

MEDIUM BODIES OF WATER

Skokomish River (fcb)*
Skokomish River North Fork (low water)
Union River (fcb)*

LARGE BODIES OF WATER

Case Inlet (fcb, oxygen, pH)
Hammersley Inlet (fcb)
Lynch Cove (fcb, oxygen, pH)
Lower Hood Canal (pH)
Oakland Bay (fcb)
Peale Passage (pH)
Shelton Harbor (fcb)

Source: DOE CleanWater Act 303D List

* Cleanup Plan Started

Community Goal: Develop and implement clean-up plans for all 303(d) listed waterbodies and no new additions to the list.

Citizen Role: Pick up pet waste and keep farm animals away from streams and rivers.

GOAL 4: Lake Resources for Recreation and Leisure

Many lakeshore residents wish to make "improvements" like clearing vegetation, adding fill and building retaining walls to the foreshore areas on their property. These improvements are often made without understanding the impacts on the lake eco-system. The impacts include loss of fish habitat, algae blooms and aquatic weed growth and general water quality deterioration.

MASON COUNTY HAS:

... **73** Lakes with a Name

... **52** Lakes with Shoreline Homes

... **40** Lakes Stocked with Fish by State DFW

... **18** Lakes with Public Access (Boat Launch &/or Swimming

... **10** Lakes Impacted by Invasive/Exotic Aquatic Species

... **10** Lakes Treated with Chemicals (2000)

... **1** Lake Managed with an Integrated Approach*

... **0** Lakes Approved as Primary Drinking Water Source

Source: WA State DFW, DOE, Mason County Health Services

Community Goal: Reduce the number of lakes negatively impacted by aquatic species growth and manage all lakes with an integrated management approach.

Citizen Role: Form or join your local lake association and encourage an integrated management approach.

*Focus - Handpulling of Weeds