

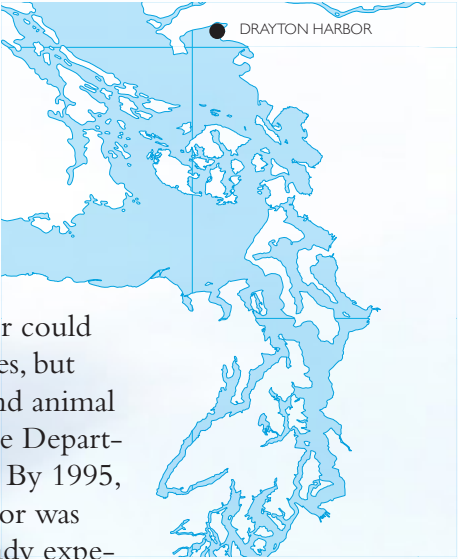
# A DETERMINED COMMUNITY RECOVERING SHELLFISH BEDS

## DRAYTON HARBOR, PUGET SOUND

### Prime Puget Sound shellfish beds, too polluted to use

A seed of hope, a bed of oysters, and an ocean of determination inspire a community to clean up a long-polluted harbor. Washington state is the nation’s largest commercial producer of oysters, clams, and mussels, and Puget Sound is prime shellfish territory. But in Drayton Harbor, near the city of Blaine, shellfish harvest was not an option—and it wasn’t for lack of shellfish. It was because the harbor lacked just one key ingredient: clean water.

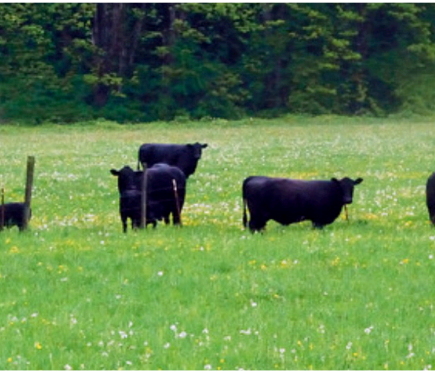
Shellfish growers estimated that a clean Drayton Harbor could produce \$2 million in oysters each year on just 100 acres, but beginning in 1988 water pollution caused by human and animal waste had so polluted the area that the Washington State Department of Health began to close shellfish beds to harvest. By 1995, conditions had worsened to the point most of the harbor was declared off limits to shellfish harvesting. In an area already experiencing a depressed economy, this was discouraging news indeed. Community leaders wanted to know why the pollution was happening and what they could do about it.



Closed shellfish beaches can be caused by many sources of pollution including:



Illegal discharges from boats



Farms with poor stream management



Leaking septic tanks



### Many causes closed the beds

In 1998, 21-percent of septic systems were failing along the Drayton Harbor shoreline. Breaks in aging sewer lines also were a problem, as was the nearby marina where some boaters were dumping human waste. Pollution from Dakota and California creeks was caused by failing septic systems and poor livestock practices. As more and more sources of septic systems and poor

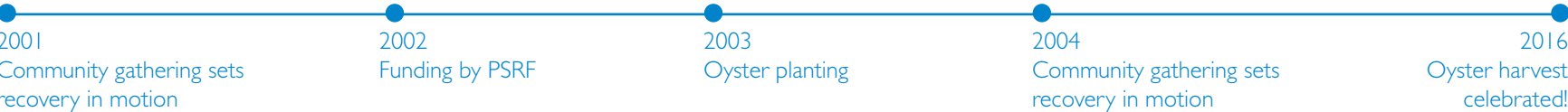
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**CLOSED DUE TO POLLUTION**  
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Recovery efforts starts



Recovery efforts started in the community

But in 2001, officials at Trillium Corporation, owners of the 200-room Semiahmoo Resort, which overlooks Drayton Harbor, organized a community meeting to ask one question: Could locals work together to clean up the harbor’s water with the goal of serving locally grown oysters in the resort’s restaurant? It took a big stretch of imagination to even ask the question. But with that meeting, the seed of hope took root. Further support came from Puget Sound Recovery Fund (PSRF) when they said yes to supporting the effort.

A nonprofit group formed, and with special permission from the state, volunteers planted baby oysters in an area where harvesting was prohibited. It takes oysters three years to grow big enough to harvest—that’s all the time the community had to clean up Drayton Harbor.



Harvesting marketable oysters and new jobs

By 2004, the oyster bed seeded with hope produced a new crop of harvestable, marketable oysters. Water quality continues to improve and the harvestable area continues to expand. In November 2016, after 25 years of clean up, the news came that 810 acres of shellfish beds had been reclassified as “approved” for harvest. A large area of Drayton Harbor was recovered and year-round harvests resumed for the first time in 22 years. The community held a major celebration in December 2016.



RESTORING SHELLFISH **ACROSS PUGET SOUND**  
IS A PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

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**WE TRACK THE SCIENCE**

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**WE PLAN NEAR TERM ACTIONS**

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**WE LOOK FOR WAYS TO FUND**

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