

Rocky Bay Closure Response Plan, Final Draft

Pierce County Shellfish Partners

June 22, 2016
Surface Water Program



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Introduction

Rocky Bay is a small embayment in northwestern Pierce County, Washington. The Rocky Bay Watershed comprises approximately 12,000 acres (18.75 square miles) and is bordered on the west and northwest by Case Inlet and the North Bay Watershed, on the east by the Minter Bay Watershed, and on the south by the Vaughn Bay Watershed.

Rocky Bay has been used for commercial shellfish production for decades and up until the 1990s had excellent water quality. However, in the mid 1990s water sampling by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) identified declining water quality in the Bay. As a result, in August 1995, Pierce County received notice from DOH that a portion of Rocky Bay was "downgraded" from an approved commercial shellfish growing area to a prohibited area. This downgrade required the formation of the Rocky Bay Shellfish Protection District, which was created in December 1995 by the Pierce County Council through Ordinance 95-134S.

Ordinance 96-1 was passed by the Pierce County Council in February 1996, establishing the Rocky Bay Shellfish Protection Program (also referred to as the Rocky Bay Closure Response Plan). Implementation of this program helped improve water quality in Rocky Bay for many years. However, water quality declines have again been identified in a small portion of the Bay, fairly near the head of the Bay.

As a result of these recent water quality declines, DOH has provided grant funds from the National Estuary Program to Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to update the original Rocky Bay Closure Response Plan and form a Rocky Bay Water Quality Team. This team is expected to meet quarterly to address water quality problems in the Rocky Bay Watershed.

Table of proposed activities

This table identifies the proposed activities to improve and protect water quality in the Rocky Bay Watershed.

The Recommendation column describes the activities. Activities are divided into three general categories, Identify (activities that identify sources of pollution), Correct (activities that correct sources of pollution), and Prevent (activities that prevent sources of pollution). Activities are further divided into groups depending upon who is the lead agency for the activities. TPCHD is Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, PCD is Pierce Conservation District, SWM is Pierce County Surface Water Management and Shellfish Partners is the Pierce County Shellfish Partners team. Some of the activities identified as being done by Shellfish Partners may be accomplished by other organizations or agencies.

The priority column (High, Medium, and Low) has been left blank at this point. Please let us know your priorities for implementing these proposed activities.

The notes column generally provides a bit more information about the proposed activities.

Recommendations	Priority (H,M,L)	Notes
Identify		
1. TPCHD		
a. Review RSS (Report of System Status) results when properties change ownership & require As-Built drawing of septic system		Possibly require system locate if on marine shoreline and no as-built
b. Perform shoreline sanitary survey		This will be conducted in 2017
c. Focus on implementation of Operation and Maintenance inspections in Rocky Bay Watershed		Would require regular inspections of septic systems
d. Review RME records for Rocky Bay Watershed that may indicate possible septic system problems		A draft system has been developed to respond to deficiency notices on this online record system
e. Share emergency downgrade, water quality, or closure info with community		Use local internet tree? Which partner should lead?
f. Collect and track additional pollution indicators like chlorine, pesticides, & hormones		Could also include MST or indicators like caffeine, surfactants, oil
g. Develop "high hits" response plan		Should this be a Partners response plan or just TPCHD?
h. Plan then implement special Rocky Bay sampling		Monthly sampling of tributaries near the new closed area
2. PCD		

Recommendations	Priority (H,M,L)	Notes
a. Launch a watershed wide resident “self-testing” water quality educational and monitoring program		Sample for DO, pH, temp, nutrients
b. Continue stream team activities in area (trainings and monitoring) & find new volunteers as sites become vacant		
c. Work with other agencies to access data regarding shoreline habitat and restoration potential		
d. Farm inventory and rating updates		
3. SWM		
a. Track development and forest practices applications in the Rocky Bay Watershed		Look for trends
b. Conduct stormwater sampling, including during storm events		
c. Complete stormwater source control inspections		
d. Post summary of sampling results findings online		
4. Shellfish Partners		
a. Apply for grant funds for incentives for O&M Inspections and farm BMP participants		
b. Develop helpful giveaways/reminders for sanitary and farm survey participants		Coffee cards were appreciated
c. GIS modeling for tracking pollutant “hot spots”		
d. Perform annual review at Rocky Bay team meeting to review trends		
e. Assess if Canada Geese are a concern in Rocky Bay		
Correct		
1. TPCHD		
a. Establish a baseline for number of septic system inspections and failure rates		
b. Provide financial assistance for septic repairs through regional loan program		
c. Identify areas of Rocky Bay at higher risk of contamination		Utilize <i>Countyview</i>
d. Establish baseline and targets for timeliness of corrections		
e. Survey program participants for feedback (sanitary		

Recommendations	Priority (H,M,L)	Notes
survey, O&M inspection, septic repair)		
f. Continue incentives program for O&M inspections, pumping, and riser installations.		
g. Mail the septic repair financial assistance fact sheet to Rocky Bay Watershed residents		
h. Enforce septic system regulations		
2. PCD		
a. Provide matching funds, technical assistance, permit assistance, design assistance, and professional services to property owners installing farm BMP's		
b. Help recipients maximize buffer quality and width		
c. Implement four BMP Improvements		
d. Launch green shoreline program and assist landowners with erosion control alternatives		Help with permitting
e. Seek BMP funds with less restrictions and limitations		
3. SWM		
a. Update stream typing maps		
b. Review Shoreline Master Program updates & note any potential problems		
c. Coordinate compliance efforts		
d. Investigate funding sources to implement BMP's		
4. Shellfish Partners		
a. Update community on implementation of correction efforts		Website? Newsletter?
b. Host regular meetings, or use different methods, to review progress toward corrections		Every other month at first, then quarterly
c. Coordinate grant application efforts to fund corrections		
d. Address homeless community, working with community services		
Prevent		

Recommendations	Priority (H,M,L)	Notes
1. TPCHD		
a. TPCHD newsletter to industry		
b. Annual septic workshop at Vaughn Civic Center		With incentives
c. Update septic system and O&M regulations		
d. Attend local fairs/events with displays/information		
e. Do public opinion surveys of Rocky residents, building upon the results of recent surveys		Work on increasing participation rates
2. PCD		
a. Offer farm inspections, resource recommendations (or Conservation Plans), soil samples, fertilizer strategies and manure removal options		
b. Collect feedback from participants		
c. Increase educational workshops, equipment rental, and guidance materials available for rural landowners and farmers		
3. SWM		
a. Complete Stormwater inspection sweep (IDDE)		
b. Add SWM to PALS notification lists for projects in the Rocky Bay drainage area		
c. Ask PALS to present on SMP update at Rocky Bay team meeting		
d. Review erosion control standards for bulkhead projects in Rocky Bay		
e. Identify potential stormwater projects in Rocky Bay (including rain gardens and drainage ditch check dams)		
f. Educate Industry (spraying companies, carpet cleaners, etc) of steps to protect water quality		
4. Shellfish Partners		
a. Host fair booth at the Key Peninsula Livable Community Fair		
b. Send post card updates or newsletter to area residents. Consider having a kiosk at the library or post office		
c. Offer general water quality workshops (Rocky Bay University)		

Recommendations	Priority (H,M,L)	Notes
d. Offer and advertise shellfish tissue sampling		Work with existing Sea Grant Program
e. Offer and advertise shellfish gardening training		
f. Run environmental stewardship advertisements or provide columns in the Key Peninsula News		
g. Provide the shoreline booklet to all Rocky Bay shoreline property owners		
h. Provide an annual report to Rocky Bay Watershed residents in late spring or early summer of each year. Maybe have a general report with an insert specific to the Rocky Bay Shellfish Protection District		Need to coordinate with other “tracking” related actions
i. Identify priority areas for conservation		
j. Identify areas for shoreline and stream side restoration pilot projects		
k. Hold quarterly Rocky Bay team meetings – share data and activity updates. Need to determine if these meetings should be held in conjunction with the Burley team meetings or the Vaughn team meetings		
l. Present Rocky Bay work plan to the Alliance for a Healthy South Sound (AHSS)		
m. Inventory type and quantity of shellfish species found in Rocky Bay		
n. Develop performance measures (outputs and outcomes) to evaluate progress		
o. Offer professional workshops for landscapers, realtors, and boaters. Need to inform realtors about the Shoreline Management Program		
p. Conduct survey to estimate Rocky Bay pet population		
q. Install signs letting people know they are entering the Rocky Bay Watershed		
r. Provide general education about what is a watershed		
s. Develop a Shellfish Partners Communication Plan and possibly a Shellfish Partners Marketing Plan		

How to provide comments on the draft plan

Comments on this draft plan need to be sent to Ray Hanowell, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, by September 20, 2016. All comments received will be considered in developing the final Rocky Bay Closure Response Plan.

We are also seeking members for the Rocky Bay Water Quality Team. Please let Ray know if you are interested in participating on this team.

TO SUBMIT COMMENTS OR SIGN UP FOR THE ROCKY BAY WATER QUALITY TEAM

Comments are due by September 20, 2016 to:

Ray Hanowell

Environmental Health Specialist

Surface Water Program

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department

(253) 798-2845

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Figure 1

Rocky Bay Watershed

