

Dear Governor Gregoire

I am contacting you concerning the recent events in Hood Canal that has resulted in the loss of thousands of oysters as well as possible environmental damage to the near shore marine habitat. There have been several articles in the local newspapers reporting on the dying oysters that were washed into the upper tidelands at Seabeck. My concern is that the damage is much larger than Scenic Beach and I am also concerned that the reports are still questioning the obvious cause of this problem.

The problem was caused by the wake of the USS Port Royal as it performed maneuvers at the Dabob Bay Navy test range on Wednesday August 11, 2010. I was present at Dabob Bay that day as well as the following days in which I observed and documented the damage.

I am not a tree hugger whining about the loss of a few oysters, I am a concerned citizen who feels compelled to bring to your attention something that needs quick and thorough attention. The possible ecological and economic loss to the state, in my opinion is greater than what is being reported.

This is a summary of my observations; I have video and photos that are available to help describe what has happened.

- I. On Wed. Aug 11 I was setting my crab pots at Zelatched Point, Dabob Bay when a very large Navy surface ship the USS Port Royal CG73 appeared at the entrance to Dabob Bay. We are very accustomed to seeing Navy vessels using the test range but I have never seen such a large surface ship there. I went ashore and a few hours later observed the ship continuously cruising up and down the Bay at a high rate of speed and although I was a distance away, the loud crashing of waves alarmed me. I went down to the beach at Zelatched Point to check on my boat and was astonished at what I saw. The surf was like something you would see in Hawaii, my boat as well as two others were swamped and everything that was in the boats was now floating along the shoreline. After great difficulty due the surf conditions I was able to get the boats ashore. I contacted the Zelatched Point Test Station with my concerns about the damage being caused by the ship. The staff there was very courteous and understanding about the situation and assured me that the ship would be slowing down. Although the swamping of the boats was a concern, my greatest concern was the possible impact to the shoreline and shellfish. The rolling action of the waves was like a washing machine constantly churning the shoreline and tossing all marine life in the tidal zone. I feel that this turbulence that went on for hours stressed the oysters to the point that they are now struggling to survive. The oysters are in their spawning phase now and are in a more delicate period than normal. So it isn't just the fact that they are being out of the water for long periods of time, they were too damaged to survive. That is only my opinion and the experts may or may not agree.
- II. The next day Thursday Aug. 12th I observed a large swath of oysters at the mid tide line. It was like a sidewalk 5-8 feet wide made of oysters that had been washed up by the wave created by the Port Royal. At this location most of the oysters were at the mid tide line, not all the way up to the high tide line. Fortunately they are not totally out of the water all day and some have been washed back into to the lower tide zone.

- III. Each day the oysters have continued to die as a result of the exposure and stress that they underwent on Wednesday by the constant tumbling action that they went through.

I am in complete support of the Navy's activities in the past at Dabob Bay, we are very fortunate to have this type of resource available in the area. The Navy has been extremely cooperative and helpful over the years and I feel that this recent exercise was out of the ordinary and they did not expect this type of results.

As a Navy veteran from a family that has served this country at sea for four generations I completely understand the Navy's need for vigorous training and real world practices, I am alive today as the result of the excellent training that was provided to me and my ship mates when I was trapped in a ship board inferno that resulted when the ship that I was on collided with another Navy vessel. It was the training and readiness that saved my life as well as the lives of my shipmates. So I do understand the Navy's need and right to use Dabob Bay to ensure that our ships and crews are prepared.

I am asking that the State perform a thorough analysis of the ecological and economic impact of this event. I would also hope that the Navy will review the activities that occurred that day and possible ways to prevent or reduce this type of problem.

As you are very aware, Hood Canal despite its beautiful appearance from the shoreline is a very fragile body of water, the low dissolved oxygen problem that led to the large fish die offs and dead zones has been very well reported and studied. Dabob Bay has not suffered the extreme problems that are occurring at the south end of Hood Canal it is still a very pristine and healthy body of water. Over the last two years I have seen a lot of improvements to the near shore environment, the baitfish are back, eel grass is spreading and the shell fish harvesting is the best that I have seen in years. I am explaining this to try to emphasize why I am so concerned. I may be wrong and possibly ringing the alarm bell over something that isn't as significant as I see it. So if I am wrong I guess it is better to err on the side of precaution. If we (all of us) had heeded the warnings described in the book "Hood Canal Splendor at Risk" which 20 years ago very accurately described what might happen to Hood Canal if action wasn't taken, the unhealthy condition of Hood Canal might have been avoided.

I am not much of a letter writer so I apologize for the poor content, and perhaps long ramblings but I hope that it conveys my concerns.

These are the people that I have contacted:

On Wed. August 11, 2010 I contacted the Zelatched Point station to voice my concerns; they were very understanding and polite. I was then called by Jeff Erickson the station supervisor to listen to my concerns, Jeff was very understanding as he was present at the time and assured me that the ship would be slowing down

On Monday I contacted Alex Bradbury with WFSW after reading his quote in the Kitsap Sun in which the impression was that the oysters would be able to survive the heat and exposure. I urged Alex to inspect the oyster beds and that I felt it was a much more significant issue than it might appear. He also understood and assured me that he would be looking into it more thoroughly.

On Tues. August 17, 2010 I contacted Jeff Shreck the DNR land manager to alert him to the possible loss of shellfish and shoreline damage.

Thursday August 17, 2010 contacted Shaari Unger at the Keyport Navy Station to alert the Navy that I felt that the problem was greater than was being reported and that I would continue to document the problem.

Sincerely,

Gary K. Jackson