

## Frequently asked questions

### ***How does Mason County Public Health work to protect our waters?***

Public Health's Water Quality staff conduct water sampling at lake and saltwater swimming beaches, as well as county-wide stream ambient monitoring, which looks at the overall trends of water quality in a given water body. More focused area and site specific water monitoring and sanitary surveys are utilized where a water quality problem is identified. For more information contact Water Quality staff: at (360) 427-9670 extension 581 for Stephanie Kenny or extension 544 for Amy Georgeson.

### ***How do I find out about safe environment friendly household cleaning products?***

Contact the Mason County Public Health, Environmental Health at (360) 427-9670 x 544 or 581 for useful tips and information.

### ***Where do I dispose of household hazardous waste and used oil and antifreeze?***

Free disposal of household hazardous waste is available to all Mason County residents. Keep items separate and clearly labeled. Contact Mason

County Solid Waste Facility (360) 427-5271 for hours and locations, including The Hoodspout, Union and Belfair facilities.



### ***Where do I find information on the location and the care of my septic system?***

For Septic Operation and Maintenance information or to request construction documents ('as-builts') for your septic system call Penny Orth at (360) 427-9670 ext. 547. The department can also provide you with a list of certified operation and maintenance specialists and pumpers



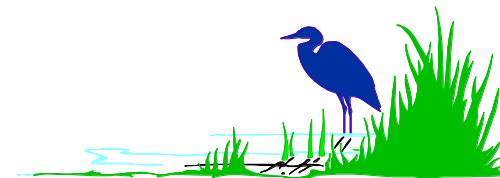
The waters of Mason County provide us with an endless enjoyment. Whether you live on a stream, river, lake or saltwater, no two water bodies are alike. What they do have in common is how they are treasured for the uniqueness, enjoyment and beauty they provide. Let's work together to protect them.

Questions or requests for more information about water resource protection?

Call us....

**Mason County Public Health  
Environmental Health**  
(360) 427-9670  
Water Quality  
ext. 581 or 544

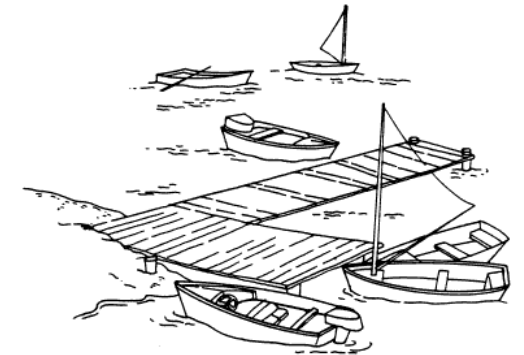
*Always working for a safer  
and healthier Mason County*



**Mason County Public Health**  
PO Box 1666, Shelton, WA 98584  
Shelton (360) 427-9670  
Belfair (360) 275-4467  
Elma (360) 482-5269

[www.co.mason.wa.us/health/envhealth/surface\\_water](http://www.co.mason.wa.us/health/envhealth/surface_water)

## LIVING ON THE WATER



People make the difference!  
Help protect water quality

### **LEARN ABOUT**

- Characteristics of healthy water bodies
- Protecting your waters
- Septic system care
- Waterfront friendly landscaping and yard care
- Do's and don'ts of waterfront living
- Environmentally friendly alternatives for home and yard
- Keeping harmful runoff out of the water
- Frequently asked questions

## Characteristics of healthy waters

Healthy waters-

- Support a diverse ecological web of plants and animals.
- Are protected and enjoyed by the people who live around them.
- Have native and water-friendly vegetation at their edges.
- Are protected from pollution by fertilizers, pesticides, nutrients household products and hazardous materials.



## Don't contribute to algae blooms

Algae are microscopic organisms that occur naturally, reproducing when the amount of sunlight, warmth and nutrients are adequate for their growth. Their frequency and intensity can be affected by shoreline residential practices. Fertilizer runoff, poorly maintained, overloaded or failing septic systems, and animal waste, all provide additional nutrients, feeding the blooms. Some algae also have the potential to produce toxins. As the organisms die off and decompose, more oxygen is used, robbing the water of the oxygen other aquatic life need to survive. Don't throw garden waste or lawn clippings in the water, they also reduce dissolved oxygen as they decompose. Please be part of the solution, don't be part of the problem.

## Kick the weed & feed habit

Is your lawn too green? Most commercial fertilizers contain nitrates and phosphates, which are carried into the water in runoff, where they feed algae blooms. Follow directions, use only what you need. Organic fertilizers from a natural source break down more slowly, allowing the nutrients to stay where they are needed longer (with the plants) and not simply run off into the water. Herbicides and pesticides can be damaging to aquatic life even in small amounts, and can have cumulative impacts

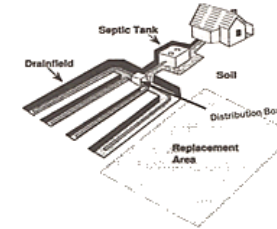
## Your landscape makes a difference

Retain or plant native vegetation at the waterfront. If you are concerned about your view, talk to your planning department about tree limbing for view protection. Native plants and trees are best adapted to the local climate and conditions, thriving with little care compared to exotics. Vegetated buffers along the shoreline help protect water from fertilizer and pesticide runoff that contribute to algae blooms and low dissolved oxygen.



## Septic system care

Your septic system depends on living, naturally occurring bacteria to function properly. How you use your system can impair or even stop the bacteria



from doing their job. Do not overload your system. For example, space your laundry loads throughout the week, rather than on one day. Try a no-phosphate detergent. Too much bleach on a regular basis kills bacteria your system uses to function properly. Don't use products labeled 'Danger' or 'Poison.' Bulk economy size powder detergents may have fillers that can clog the tank inlet. Many maintenance specialists recommend liquid detergents – please use only the recommended amount. Put sheet fabric softeners in the dryer instead of using liquid softener. These are less clogging to your system. Compost vegetable kitchen scraps instead of using a garbage disposal. Avoid commercial drain cleaners. Learn about environmentally friendly household cleaning products - see Mason County Public Health's 'Back to Basics' brochure. Be careful of what goes in your system, inspect your system regularly and have it pumped by a certified pumper who will recommend a schedule for future pumping.

## Things you can do for the waters of Mason County

- Compost garden waste and lawn clippings. Many recycling programs have low cost compost bins.
- Use native plantings as a shoreline buffer.
- Maintain and pump your septic system regularly.
- Learn what products and uses could damage or impair your septic system function.
- Pick up pet waste and dispose of in an approved landfill.
- Reduce or eliminate fertilizer use near the water, switch to organic slow release kinds and use sparingly.
- Freeze unused bait for later.
- Dispose of household hazardous waste and used automotive products only at approved locations.

