



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH

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January 4, 2022

**TO:** Michelle A. Davis, Executive Director  
State Board of Health

Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH  
Secretary of Health

**FROM:** Lauren Jenks, Assistant Secretary  
Division of Environmental Public Health

**SUBJECT:** Recommendation to revise chapter 246-282 WAC, Sanitary control of shellfish

The Department of Health (department) requests the State Board of Health (board) consider amendments to chapter 246-282 WAC, Sanitary control of shellfish. The scope of the rulemaking will focus largely on WAC 246-282-006, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* control plan. *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (Vp) is a naturally occurring bacteria found in marine waters. Molluscan bivalve shellfish acquire Vp through filter feeding. Humans who consume raw or undercooked shellfish containing Vp can develop an intestinal disease called vibriosis.

In 2021, there were a high number of vibriosis cases involving Washington shellfish largely due to very high temperatures during the summer months. The department expects this trend to continue. This indicates a need to review the rule requirements to determine if the current controls are adequate to protect consumers and consider more proactive measures to prevent illness and protect public health. Revisions could include a combination of requirements based on environmental factors to determine the safety of shellfish prior to harvest and consumption. For example, amending the “time of harvest to cooling requirements” which starts in July to a more restrictive control season beginning in May. Other minor technical amendments will be considered in the chapter, such as updating definitions and seed size.

The department convened its Vp Advisory Committee (VpAC) on November 22, 2021 to discuss the Vp illnesses caused from the 2021 harvest season. Both tribal and non-tribal shellfish industries are supportive of changing the requirements for closing and opening growing areas based on environmental conditions as they fluctuate during an extended control season.

The department will work with the VpAC to develop recommendations to the board for revising the chapter. The VpAC is made up of representatives from tribal and non-tribal shellfish industries, Washington Sea Grant, Local Health Jurisdictions, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the department's Public Health Lab, and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. The department will consult with additional stakeholders and collaborate with tribes as needed on revisions to the chapter.

For additional information, please contact Todd Phillips, Director, Office of Environmental Health and Safety, [todd.phillips@doh.wa.gov](mailto:todd.phillips@doh.wa.gov).