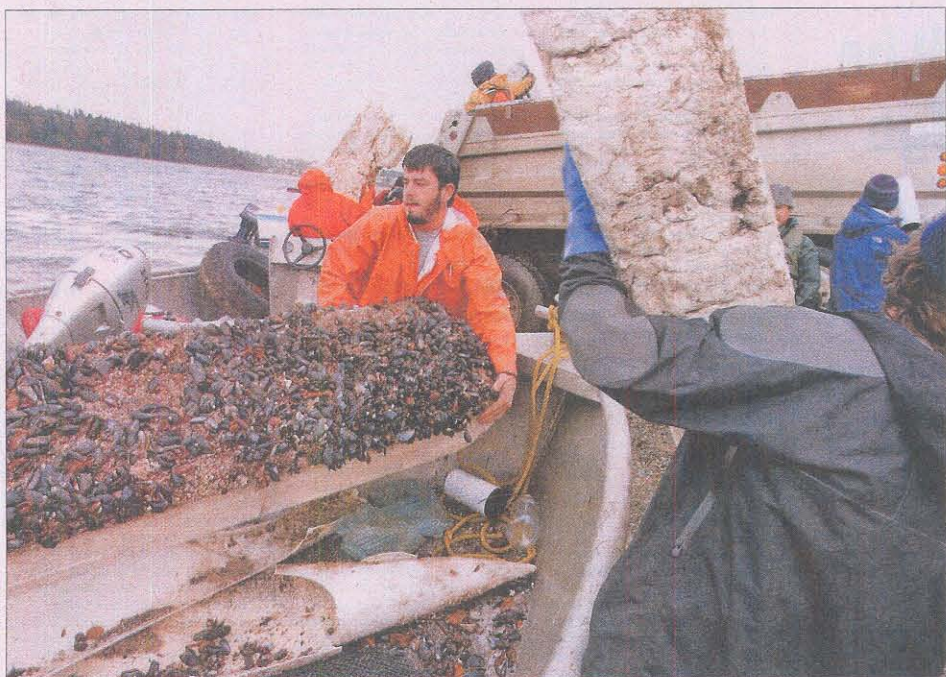




## DEBRIS CONTROL

# Dirty job: Shellfish workers rid beaches of tons of trash



Steven M. Herrpich/The Olympian

Justin Johns of Salish Seafood unloads large pieces of Styrofoam during the fall cleanup of South Sound beaches by area shellfish growers at the Arcadia boat launch Thursday morning.

BY JOHN DODGE  
THE OLYMPIAN

Eighty volunteers representing 14 South Sound commercial shellfish companies patrolled dozens of miles of beach Thursday, picking up beach litter totaling 55 cubic yards.

About 15 percent of the debris was generated from South Sound shellfish growing operations, beach cleanup organizers estimated. The rest was junk from other folks who live, work or participate in recreation on the area's shores and marine waters.

The fall and spring beach cleanups are a recognition by the shellfish industry that they must remain vigilant in their efforts to help keep the beaches free of debris to maintain or improve relations with their waterfront neighbors.

"It's a recognition of the fact that we're farming out there in a pretty harsh environment and occasionally debris escapes from our farms," Taylor Shellfish spokesman Bill Dewey said.

As with past cleanups, the bulk of material collected — which was enough to fill more than five dump trucks — was chunks of Styrofoam that broke loose from docks and floats, said Linda Lentz, a cleanup organizer from Chelsea Farms.

Another big part of beach litter is tires that people discard on the beach. Others break loose from docks where they're used as boat bumpers.

"We collected 58 tires," Lentz said. "We usually find at least 50."



A crew from Arcadia Point Seafood comes into the Arcadia boat launch laden with garbage. While Styrofoam is the most common item collected in beach clean-ups, a recent trip also included a half-empty fifth of whiskey, a tricycle and a color TV.

Some of the more unusual litter included a half-empty fifth of whiskey, a tricycle and a 19-inch color television.

More than a dozen boats and barges combed beaches throughout South Sound, including Oakland Bay; Totten, Eld, Hammersley, Henderson, Case and Little Skookum inlets; the Nisqually Reach; Dana and Pickering passages; Squaxin, Stretch and Harstene islands; and Key Peninsula.

Once their boats were filled with garbage, crews headed to the Arcadia Point boat launch to off-load the debris for disposal or, in some cases, re-use.

One of the first boats to arrive belonged to the Squaxin Island

tribe's Salish Seafoods. It was filled with Styrofoam.

"We also found five oyster grow bags — they can be re-used," Salish Seafoods' Justin Johns said.

A large scow belonging to Seattle Shellfish was next to arrive with a wide assortment of junk, including 23 oyster grow bags, 25 clam sacks, two plastic tubes used to grow geoducks, five small pieces of netting used to cap the tubes and 10 rubber bands to get the net caps on the tubes.

With the growth of intertidal geoduck farming in South Sound, litter from the farms is a sore point with shoreline property owners.

"But it's really clear that aqua-

**Web site of the week**

Go to [www.olympiccoastcleanup.us](http://www.olympiccoastcleanup.us) to learn more about beach cleanup efforts on the Washington coast. The next major cleanup will be April 21, 2007.

culture gear is a small percentage of the litter we picked up," said Seattle Shellfish operations manager Paul Harris as his crew tossed Styrofoam into a dump truck.

The organized volunteer cleanups began in earnest in spring 2005, when 70 cubic yards of junk was picked off the beaches, followed by 20 cubic yards in fall 2005 and 60 cubic yards in spring 2006, Lentz said.

The spring cleanups collect more debris because they follow the winter storm season.

Money raised at the annual SLURP shellfish festival, of which the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association was host, was used to pay for garbage disposal and a hot lunch and coffee for the volunteers.

"We feel good about this project," Lentz said. "We care about the beaches and want to keep South Sound clean."

John Dodge is a senior reporter and Sunday columnist for The Olympian. He can be reached at 360-754-5444 or [jdodge@theolympian.com](mailto:jdodge@theolympian.com).