SHELLFISH / MARINE HABITAT INVESTIGATION

INFORMATION REPORT

2000 RAZOR CLAM FISHERY

BY

TERRY LINK

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM
OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE
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ASTORIA, OREGON 97103

INTRODUCTION

The Pacific razor clam fishery on Clatsop beach (Tillamook Head to Columbia River) was sampled four days each tide series April through July and was monitored regularly during the winter fishery. Sport and commercial diggers were interviewed to obtain data on digging effort, number and age composition of clams, and harvest area. Data from beaches south of Tillamook Head were collected as time permitted. Random age and length data, samples for biological toxin analysis, wastage of clams and other miscellaneous data were collected and reported.

SPORT FISHERY

Clatsop Beach

Record low harvest and effort occurred in the year 2000 after The winter of 1999 beach erosion, the worst seen in twenty years, caused heavy losses of clams. A harvest of 78,000 clams was taken on 17,000 digger trips.

The winter fishery had little effort and harvest. Clams were only found on the north end of Clatsop Beach.

A spring harvest of 78,000 clams was taken on 17,000 digger trips. Diggers averaged 4.52 clams per trip with 38% of the catch coming from Area 1 (Peter I. to South Jetty). News releases that indicated clam numbers would be low this year helped to keep effort down. Table 1 lists harvest, catch rates and number of diggers by area. The age composition of the sport catch is listed in Table 2. Wastage of clams was minimal as few small clams were present.

The fall fishery had low effort due to low clam numbers and good digging in Washington. No effort or harvest was calculated. The 2000 year class was found in several areas but lack of time prevents any determination of set size or location.

Table 1. SPORT HARVEST OF RAZOR CLAMS AND NUMBER OF DIGGERS BY AREA FROM CLATSOP BEACH, APRIL THROUGH JULY, 2000.

AREA	MILES OF BEACH	NO. OF DIGGER TRIPS	CLAMS DUG / DIGGER TRIP	NO. OF CLAMS DUG	NO. OF CLAMS WASTED	TOTAL CLAMS HARVESTED
1	3.6	4717	6.27	29576	0	29576
2	6.2	3735	4.93	18414	0	18414
3	5.0	2285	5.33	12177	0	12177
4	1.2	561	2.85	1599	0	1599
5	2.0	5888	2.69	15839	0	15839
TOTAL	18.0	31077	4.52	77605	0	77605

Area 1 Columbia River to Peter Iredale.
Area 2 Peter Iredale to Sunset Beach Road.
Area 3 Sunset Beach Road to Gearhart Beach road.
Area 4 Gearhart Beach Road to Necanicum River.
Area 5 Necanicum River to Tillamook Head.

Table 2. AGE COMPOSITION OF SPORT DUG CLAMS IN PERCENT FROM CLATSOP BEACH, 1995-2000.

YEAR OF HARVEST	AGE IN YEARS 0	1	2	3	4	5+
1995	1.9	27.9	39.2	23.9	5.5	1.6
1996	10.5	40.3	27.4	15.2	5.6	1.0
1997	40.2	29.9	19.8	7.8	1.5	0.8
1998	15.5	44.5	27.9	9.7	2.0	0.4
1999	8.8	34.9	38.2	14.4	3.5	0.2
2000	8.0	16.3	28.5	27.0	16.2	4.0
10 YR. AV.	13.0	33.1	34.5	13.9	4.5	1.0

Beaches South Of Tillamook Head

Digging occurred on many beaches along the coast but effort was minimal and harvest poor. No clams were reported on beaches in the Cannon Beach area.

COMMERCIAL FISHERY

The commercial harvest was 4,221 clams (938 pounds), one of the lowest harvests on record. Harvest data are listed in Table 3. The age composition of commercially dug clams are listed in Table 4.

A total of 32 commercial harvesters were issued ODF&W shellfish harvest permits, but only 9 diggers sold clams. The value of clams to the digger reached $3.00 per pound for human consumption. Low numbers of clams had many harvesters keeping their catches for personal use and not selling their catch to a wholesale buyer. Fall digging was poor and little effort has been observed.

Table 4. AGE COMPOSITION IN PERCENT FOR COMMERCIALLY DUG CLAMS, CLATSOP BEACH, 1995-2000.

YEAR OF	AGE IN YEARS					
HARVEST	0	1	2	3	4	5+
1995	0.0	20.7	43.2	22.9	10.4	2.8
1996	0.3	49.1	23.4	16.0	11.2	0.0
1997	0.0	26.0	33.8	39.0	1.2	0.0
1998	1.8	40.7	36.3	16.4	4.3	0.5
1999	0.0	25.0	34.8	37.0	3.0	0.2
2000	3.0	18.5	43.6	15.7	16.2	3.0
10 YR. AV.	1.4	29.6	40.2	21.6	6.3	0.9

MISCELLANEOUS PROJECTS

Biological Toxins

Department staff with the help of several volunteers collected Clatsop Beach razor clam samples used for toxin analysis during the year.