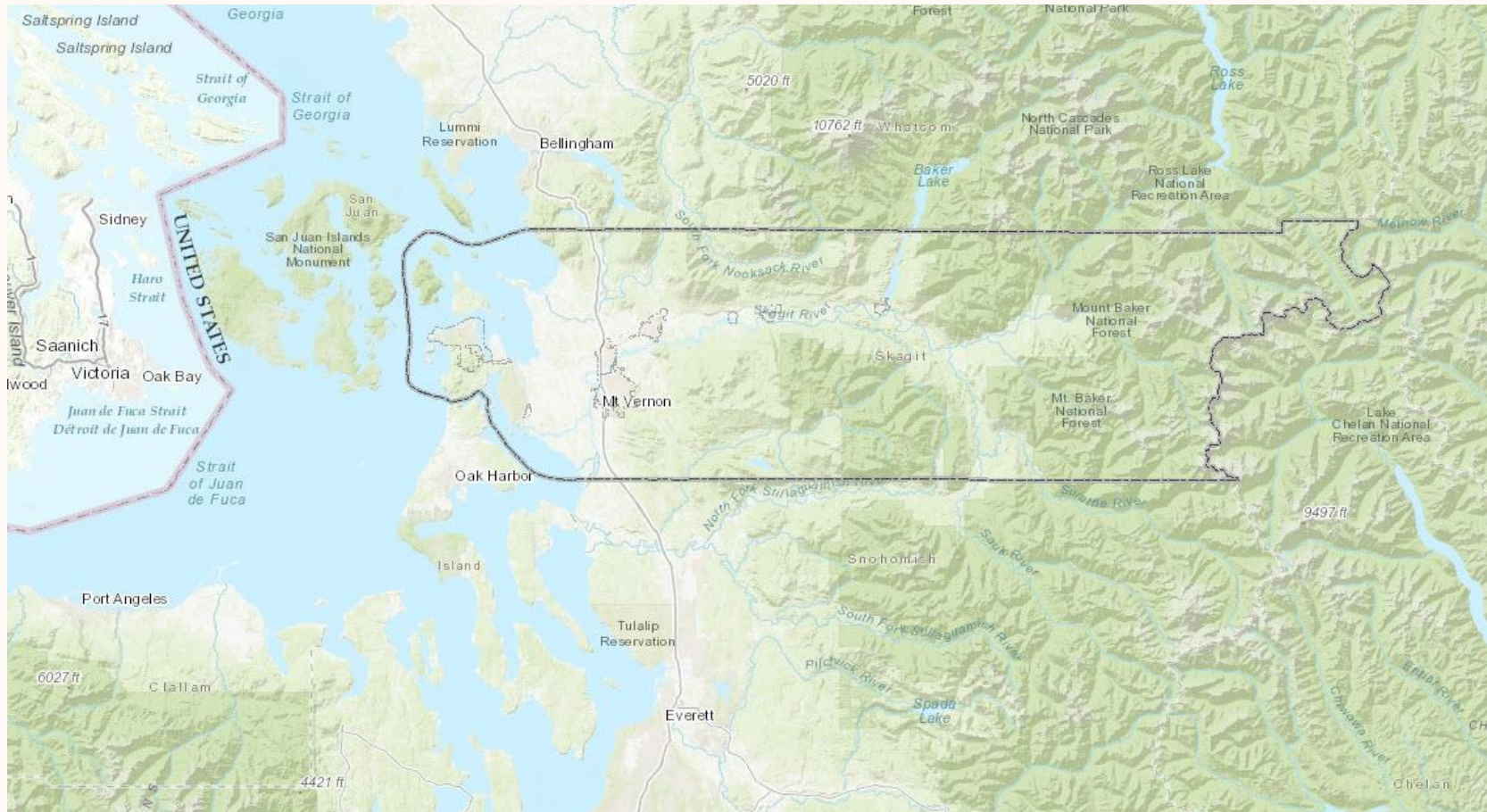


Challenges and Successes in **Operations & Maintenance**

Corrina Marote
OSS Program Lead/Public Health
Skagit County



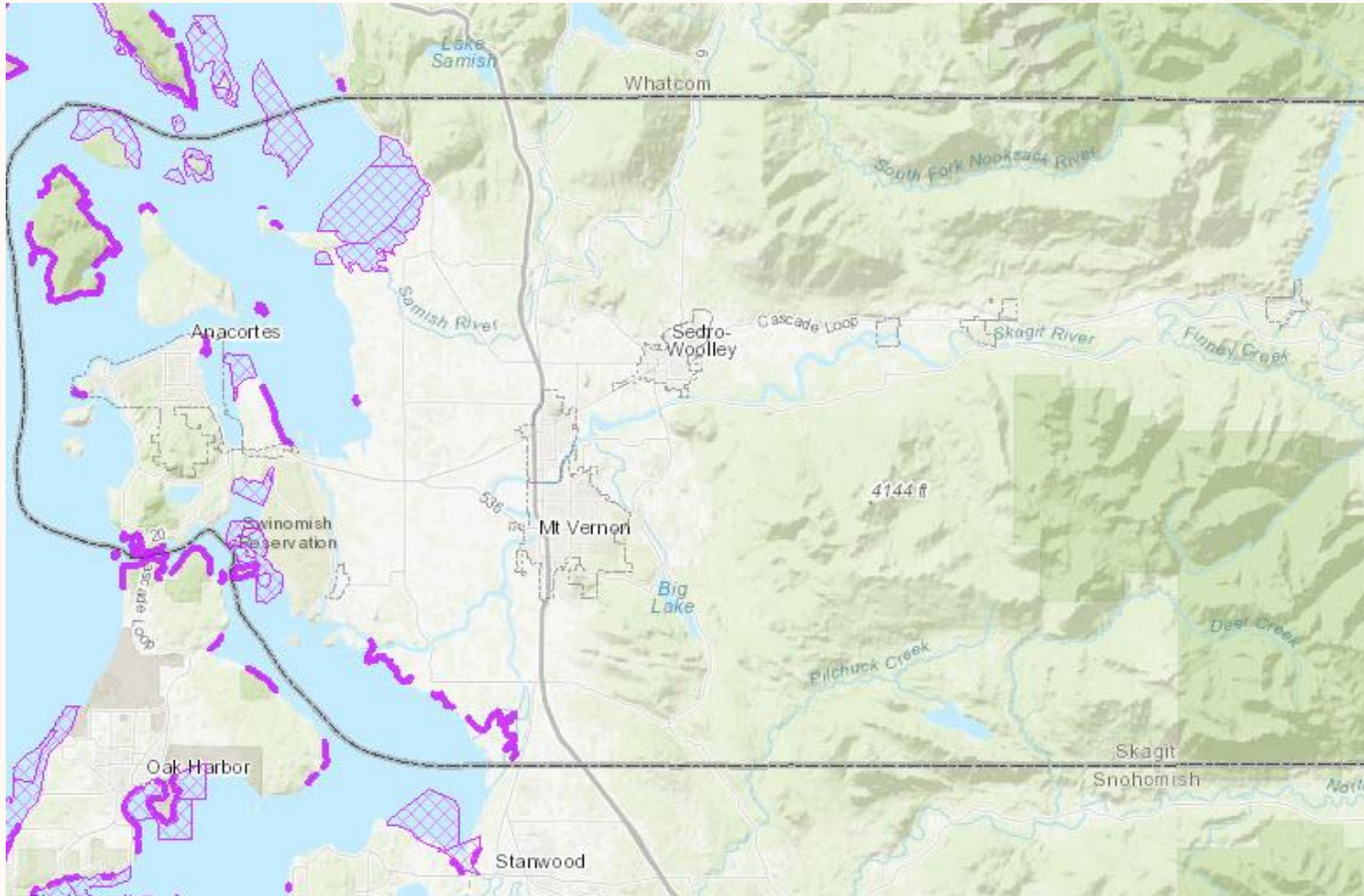
Skagit County



Approximately 19,000 On-site Sewage Systems (OSS)



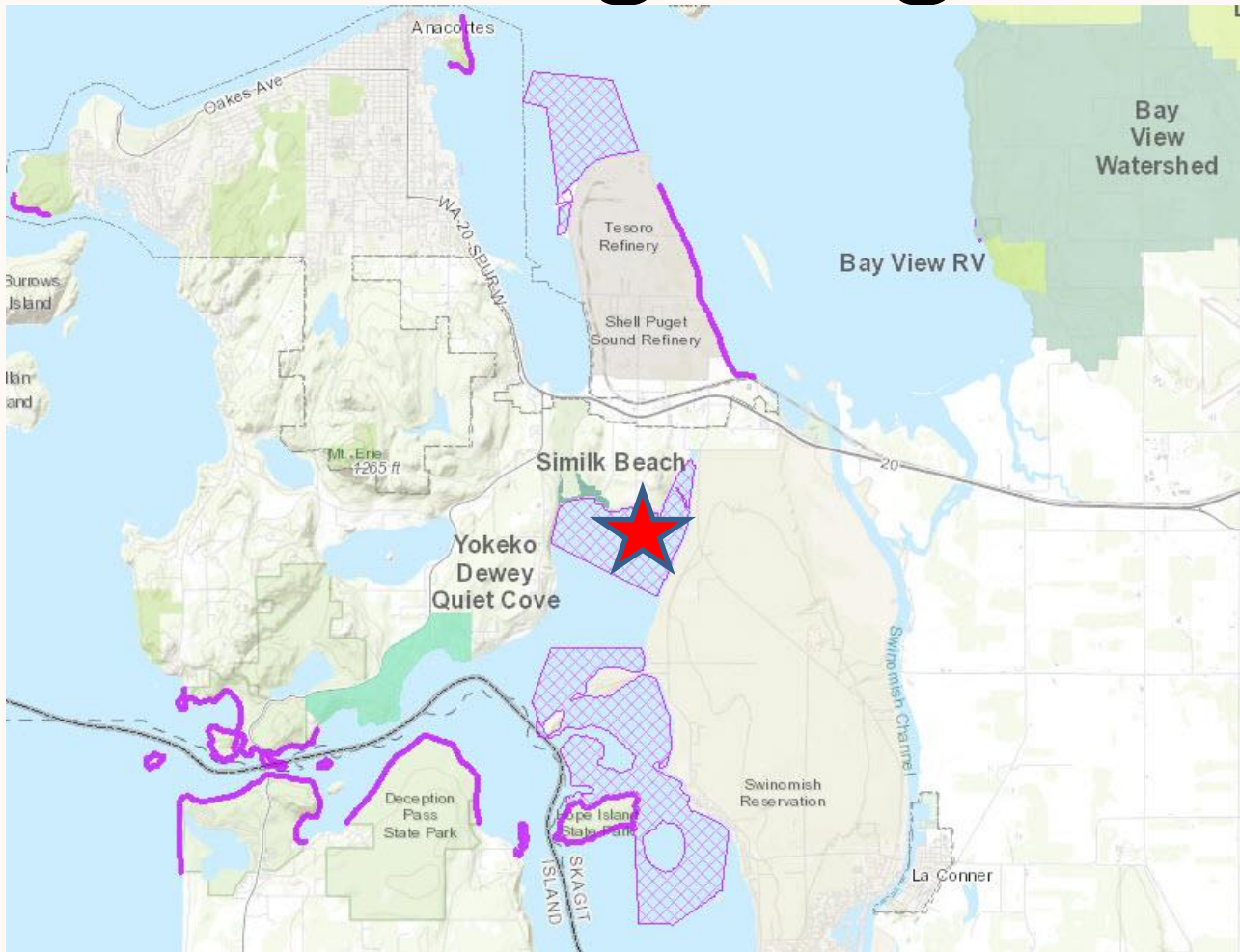
Skagit County



Shellfish growing areas



O&M: the beginning



Similk Bay 1990



Sources of Pollution

- OSS
- Pet waste
- Agriculture practices
- Small farms
- Lawn chemicals
- Wildlife
- Others?



OSS status February 2006



Applicable sources of pollution to Similk Bay

Community Outreach

- Community meetings, 2001
- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Newsletter updates
- Septics 101 classes
- Sanitary survey for each property
 - Site assessment and dye test
- Report card for 65-70 properties
- LABOR INTENSIVE



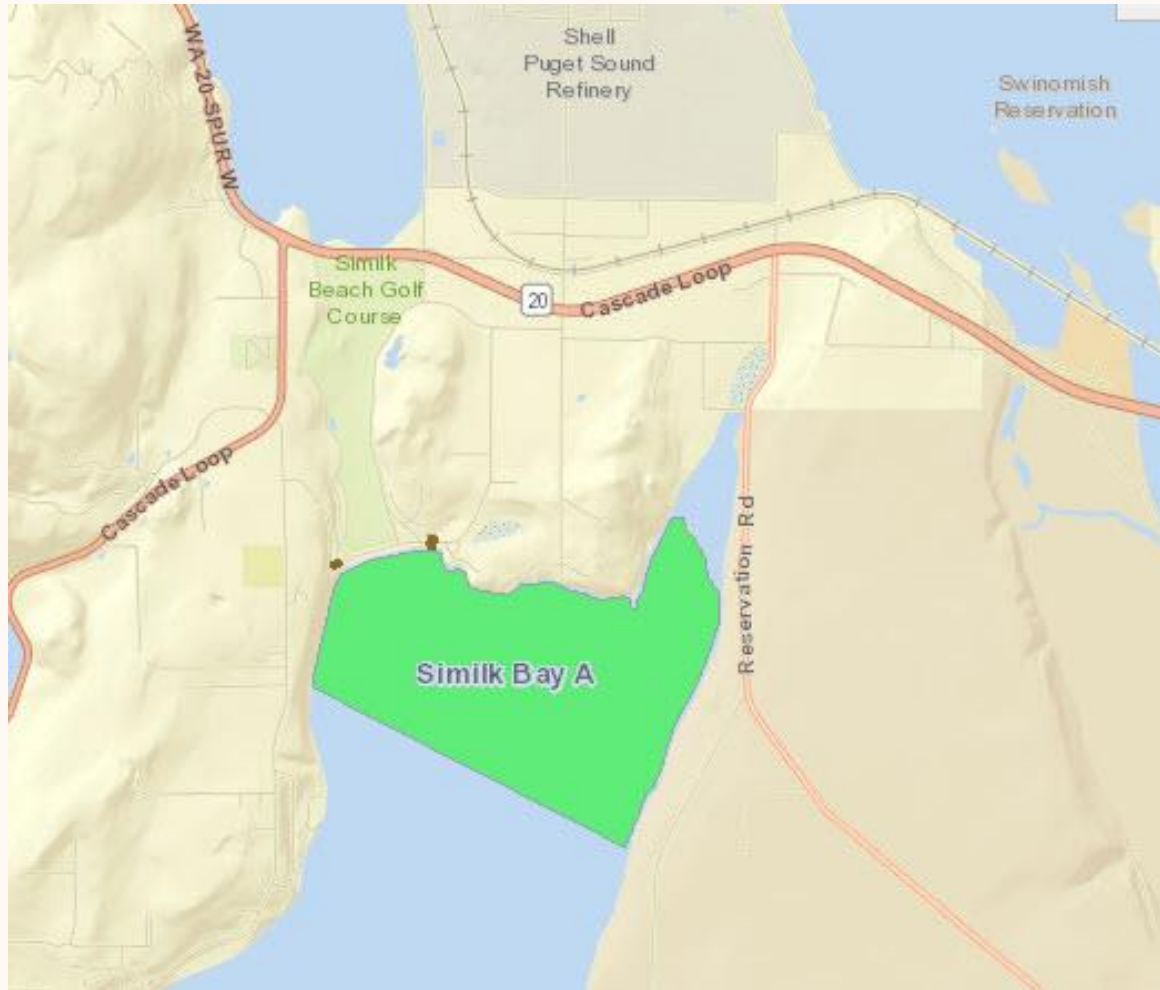
SUCCESS!



OSS status July 2007



SUCCESS!



DOH upgrade to APPROVED December 2010



Other factors driving O&M program expansion

- TMDL plans developed 2007, Ecology
- OSS code revision 2007, DOH
- Marine Recovery Areas (MRAs) adopted 2008
- Clean Samish Initiative 2009, Ecology
 - 4000+ shellfish acres downgraded
 - Multiple agency engagement
 - Implement TMDL
 - Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC)
 - EPA funding assistance for activities

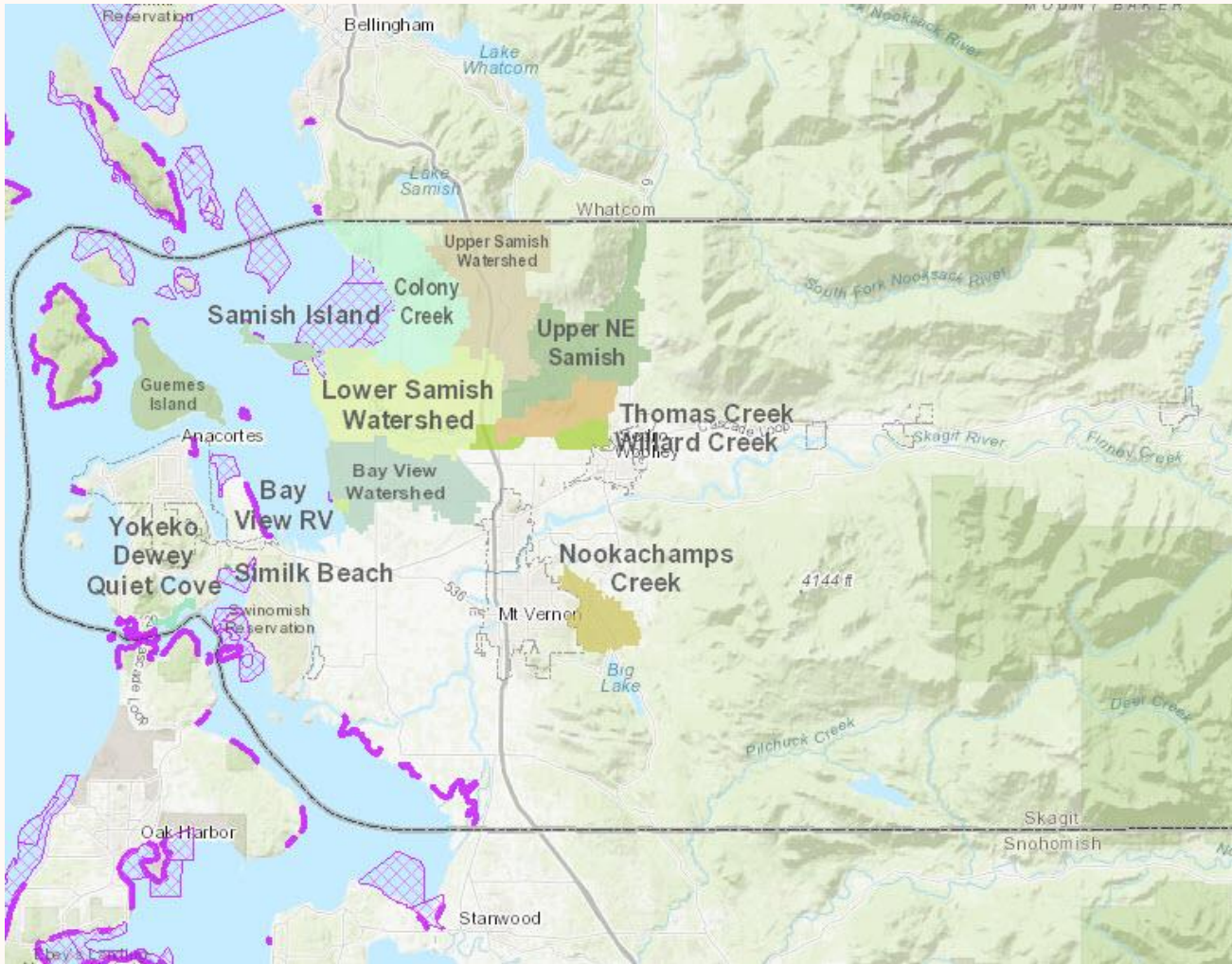


MRA Development

Common Themes	Differences	Unique
Status of OSS unknown	Seasonal vs full-time residency	Sole source aquifer (Guemes Island)
Impaired WQ with potential to impact PH	Proximity to shoreline	
	Development density	
	Quality of soils	
	Commercial vs recreational shellfish beds	
	TMDL plan implementation	



MIRAs



Approximately 6500 OSS



OSS Program Actions

- Local code revision to include enforcement, adopted 2016
- Prioritize enforcement in MRAs
 - Focus for inspection reminder mailings
- O&M Program
 - Millions and millions...
 - Reminder letters to property owners in MRAs
 - Reminder letters in targeted areas based on WQ
 - Phone calls, site visits, loan information, repairs, education courses, provider certifications



Strategies and Tools for Success

- Support by elected officials and manager
- Enforcement in local code
- Online Septics 101 since 2014
- Data management (Online RME)
- GIS mapping tools
- PIC, coordinated investigation efforts
- Policies and procedures for fairness
- Educational mailings and social media (Next Door)



Enforcement Policy & Procedures: O&M Inspections

- 1st letter: 60 day deadline to inspect (friendly, informative with reference to WAC)
- 2nd letter: 30 day deadline with reference to potential fines
- 3rd letter: 10 day deadline with date fines accumulate
- 4th letter: reminder that fines are accruing
- 5th letter + invoice for \$75/day fine for 10 days



Fines

- Up to 5% fined after each mailing cycle
 - About 50% or more comply, fines deleted
 - A few pay without complying
 - Cycle begins again with next mailing for area
 - 2-3% are referred to debt collection
 - Phone calls, some are unpleasant
 - Some pay debt collection
 - A few property owners repeat the cycle



Failure Enforcement

- Timeline to repair depends on season failure was discovered
 - Wet season: property owner must initiate steps within 60 days
 - Dry season: property owner must initiate and complete repair by October 31



Failure Enforcement

- Enforcement letters include:
 - List of designers
 - Loan program information for repairs and replacements
 - Opportunity to appeal finding
 - Potential for daily fines



Failure Enforcement

- If compliance not met, \$250/day fines accumulate
- Monthly reminder of fine accrual
- After 60 days of fine accrual, issue Notice to Abate with 30-day deadline (certified and regular mail)
 - Include appeal form



Failure Enforcement

- After deadline, obtain Health Officer Order with options:
 - Repair or replace failed OSS
 - Vacate the premises
 - Discontinue use of OSS
 - 30-day deadline
 - Include appeal form
 - Hand-deliver Order or post at property, prepare Declaration of Service



Failure Enforcement

- After deadline, consult with Prosecuting Attorney for further enforcement
 - Potential resolution from Board of Commissioners
 - Note: these are rare situations and often involve other enforcement issues
- If property owner responds at any stage, develop compliance schedule on individual basis



Failure Enforcement

- Questions about Enforcement?



Challenges

- Staff reductions since 2009
 - Establish high rate of efficiency with 2 ½ EH, 1/3 Admin staff
- Finite number of O&M providers
- Funding sources wax and wane
- Property owners with fixed incomes (are these who receive fines???)
- Property owners who refuse to cooperate

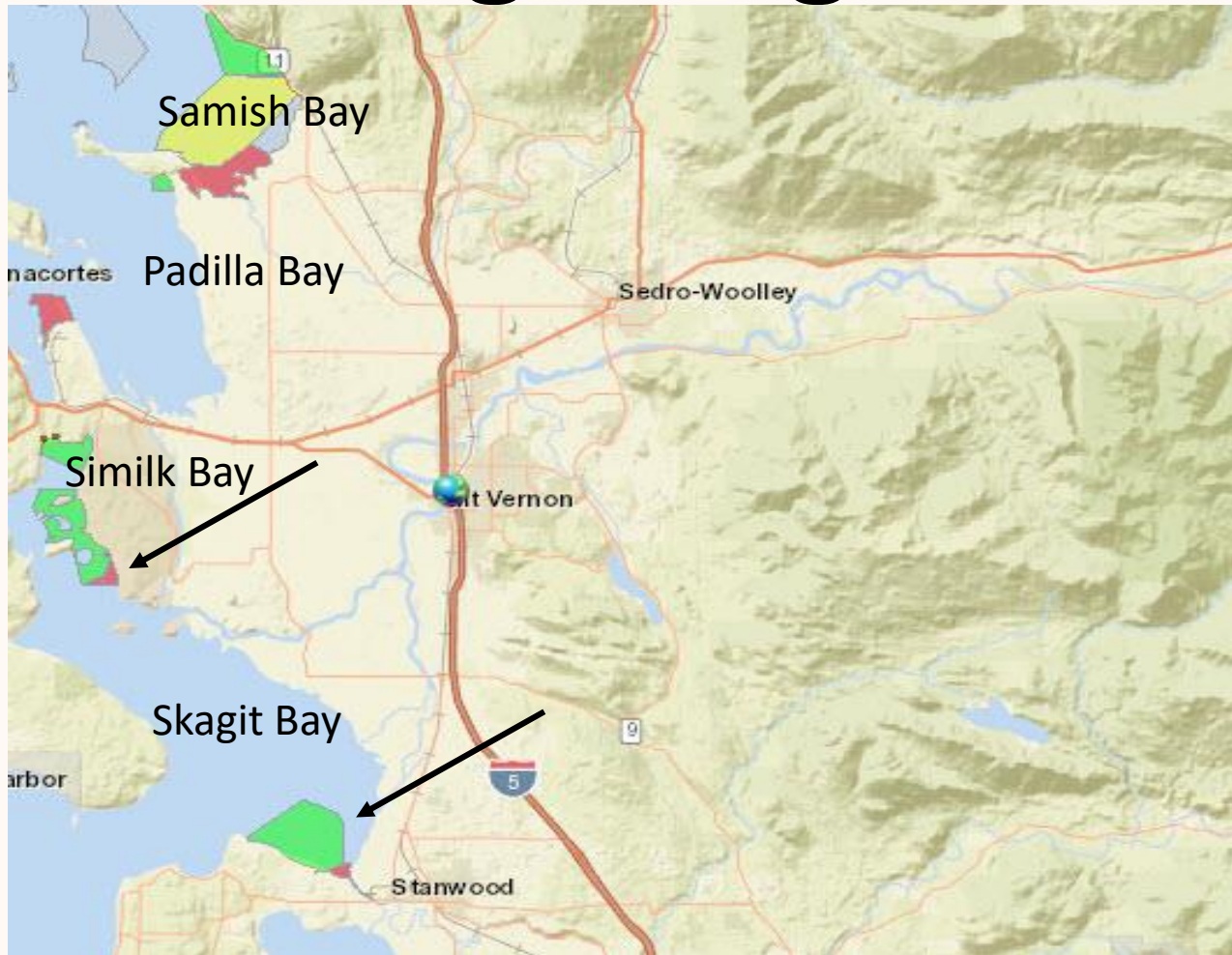


Challenges

- Fairness to all OSS owners in Skagit County
- Establish new social norm of inspections
 - Keep property owners informed of obligation
- New shellfish growing areas facing downgrades



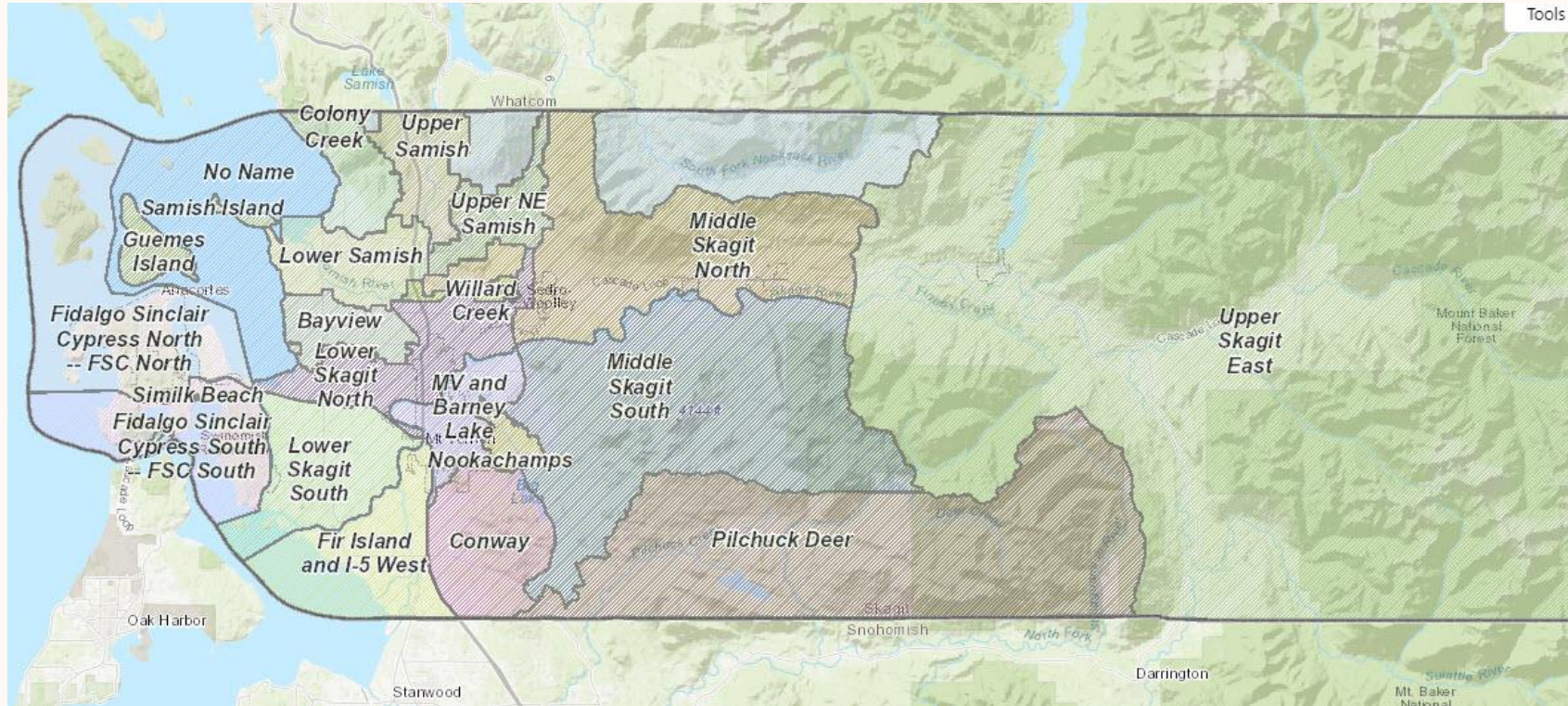
Shellfish growing areas



New areas of concern, potential or actual downgrades



Watersheds in Skagit County



Fairness to all OSS owners: inspection reminder mailings



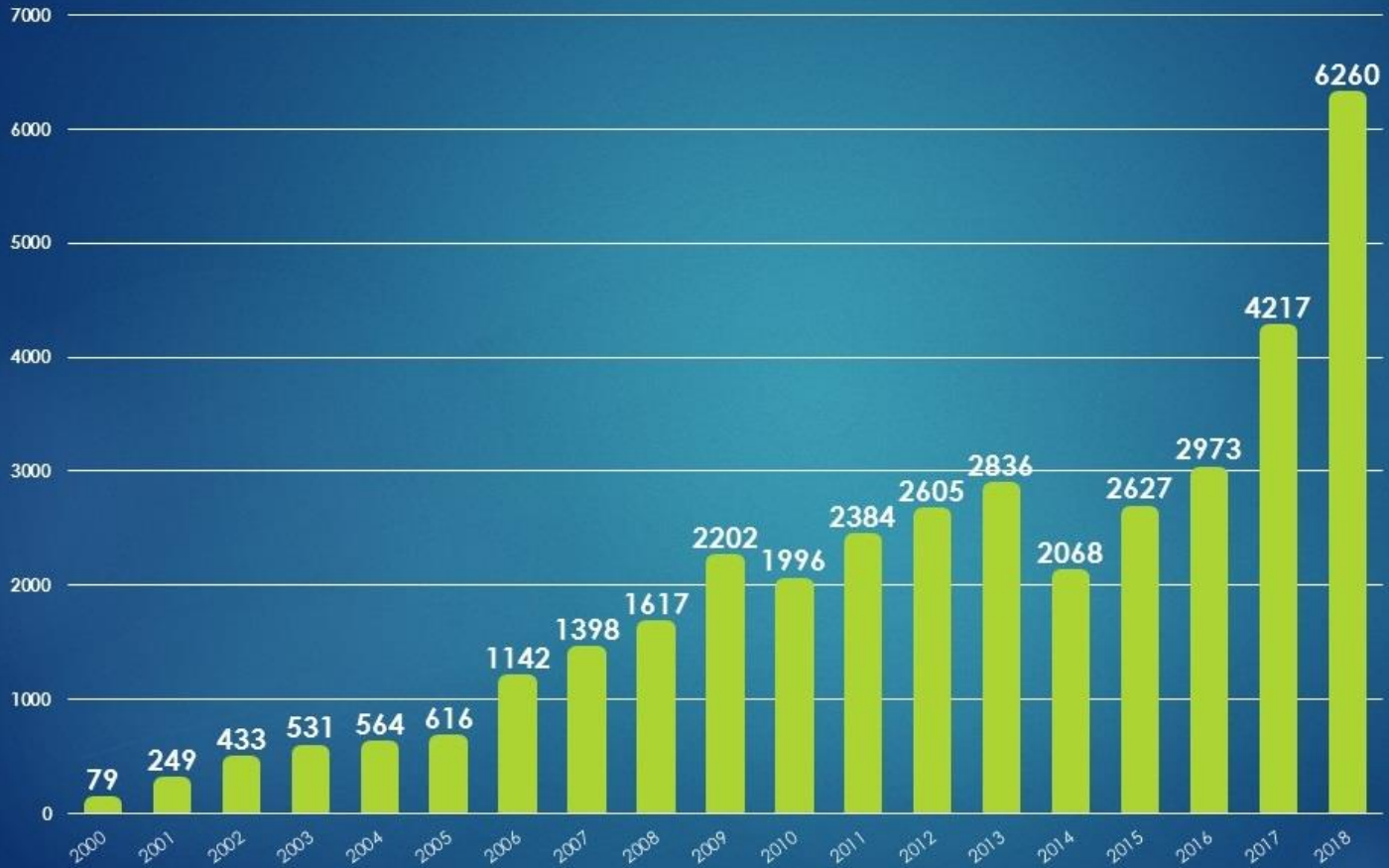
Gradations of Success

- Compliance with WAC 246-272A requirements
- Water quality improvement
- Upgrade shellfish harvest areas

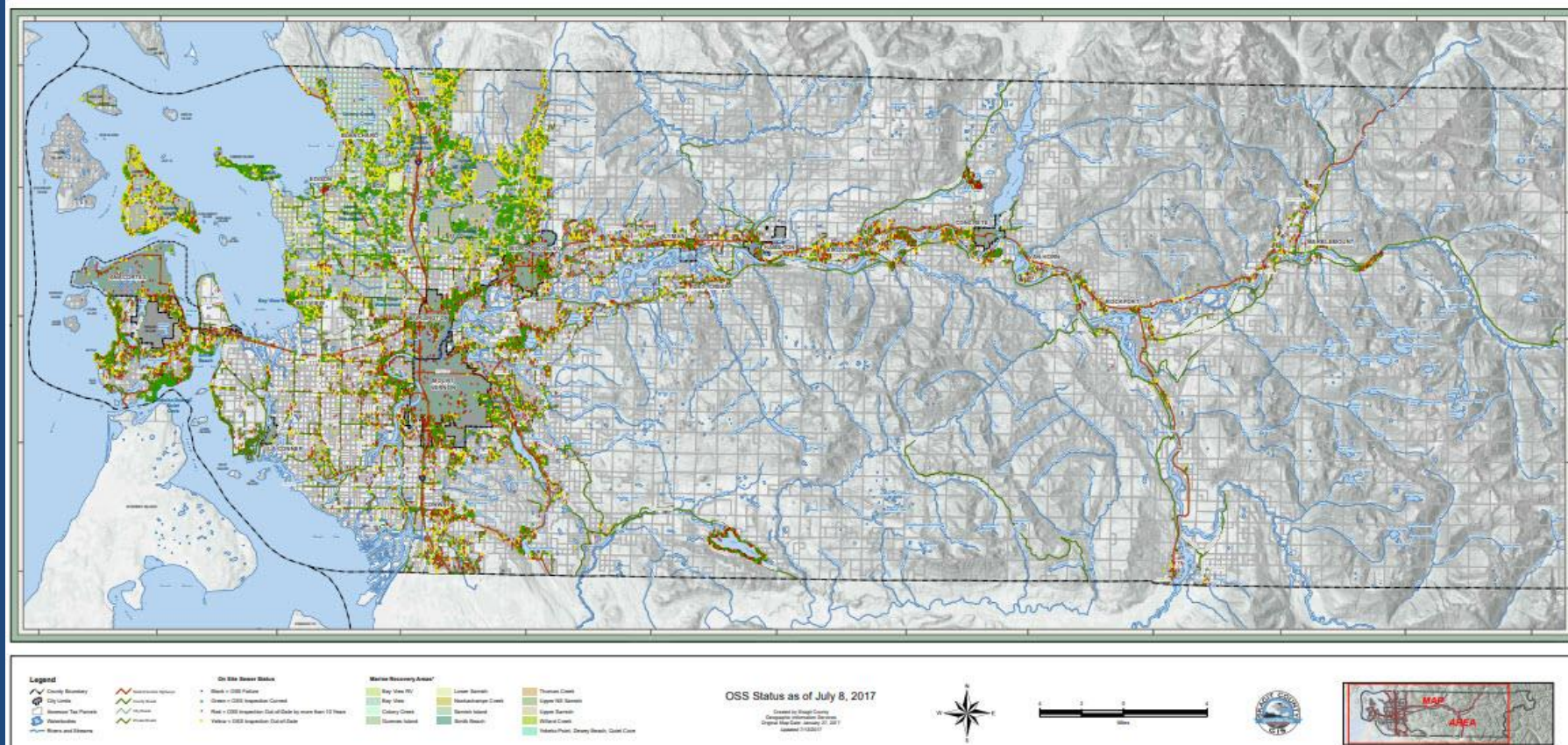


Success!

Septic System O&M Inspections in Skagit County



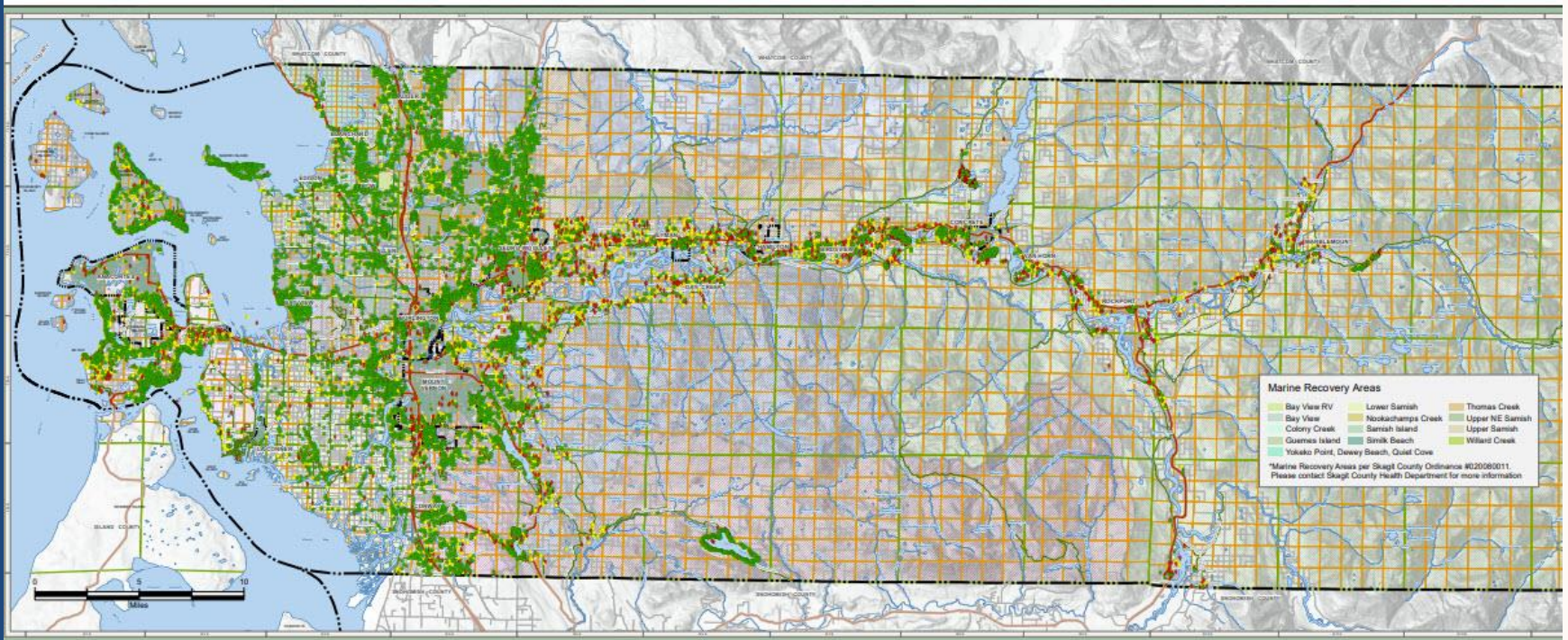
Success!!



2017 July OSS status map



Success!!!



Skagit County Health Department - OSS Status as of October 19, 2018

2018 October OSS status map



Success!

Septic Systems in Skagit County

2018 by the numbers

SEPTICS EDUCATION

Online Septics 101
Participants:

378

Total participants in eight
Septics 201 field trainings:

237

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Inspection rebates issued*

156

Loans for repairs

17

SEPTIC INSPECTIONS COMPLETED

6,139

FAILURES & REPAIRS

45

failures discovered

78%

of these were repaired or
replaced within the year.

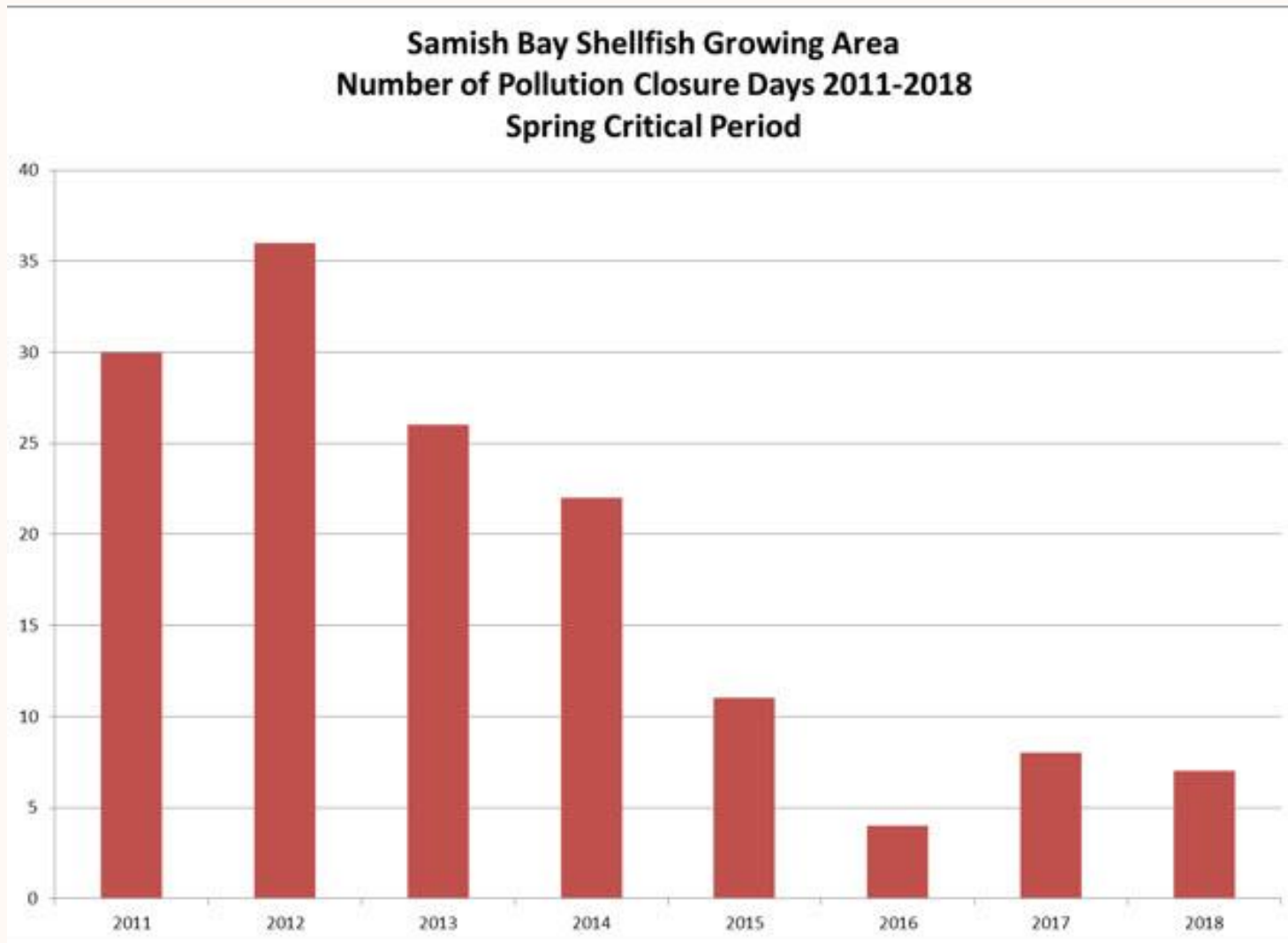
* the inspection rebate program is currently out of funds

WWW.SKAGITCOUNTY.NET/HEALTH
WWW.POOPSMART.ORG

SKAGIT COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH



Success! WQ improvement



Future Plans

- Received NEP funding to begin financial assistance program for low-income residents.
- Applied to join Craft 3 loan program to run simultaneously with County loan program.
- Keep on keepin on!





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