

Taylor Shellfish to remove geoduck tubes

By **ARLA SHEPHARD**

Taylor Shellfish recently filed a proposal to remove 20,000 of its geoduck tubes from tidelands in the North Bay that belong to the state.

"The tidelands are difficult to survey and the boundaries are complex," said Bill Dewey, a spokesman for Taylor Shellfish, which was embroiled in a boundary dispute in 2008 with the state Dept. of Natural Resources. "Ever since we accidentally farmed in an area that belonged to the state, we've been going methodically through our various farms to make sure we don't have issues elsewhere."

In 2008, the shellfish giant sued the Dept. of Natural Resources for ownership of tidelands it was found to be trespassing on in Totten Inlet near Olympia. They also sought \$4.5 million in damages, before reaching a settlement to pay the state \$1.5 million over three years.

The recent trespass was not surprising given the challenges of delineating ownership on tidelands, said Aaron Toso, spokesman for the Dept. of Natural Resources.

"It's important to protect the public's interest and making sure that the people of the state are compensated when these challenges do come," Toso said.

In July of last year, Taylor began financing a number of surveys to determine the actual boundaries of its farms, which often lie on the fringes of state property.

"Waterward boundaries between private and state tidelands have been historically difficult to verify," said Taylor Shellfish president Bill Taylor in a 2009 press release. "Modern GIS mapping tools have made this easier and in cooperation with DNR we're using them to identify other tideland areas we farm which may need survey verification."

Surveys of tidelands are expensive, Toso said, but Taylor Shellfish has been "very cooperative and helpful trying to rectify the situation."

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Removing the 20,000 tubes will only take a couple nights of work, Dewey said. While the tubes were put in place, no geoduck

larvae had been planted yet.

Geoduck harvesting involves a six-year crop cycle, whereby baby geoducks spend their first year to year and a half in sections of PVC pipes capped with mesh and sunk into the

tide flats. When the clams, which can weigh more than 15 pounds and grow up to six feet, are mature enough to burrow into the ground, the tubes are removed.

Taylor Shellfish also requested the right to maintain its oysters, oyster nets

and bags near the disputed area. The company is in talks with the Dept. of Natural Resources now on how to deal with the existing situation.

"We want to make this right with the state," Dewey said.