

Sierra Club weighing in on geoducks

By JOHN COOPER

Another voice has been heard in the discussion about the leasing of public shorelines on Harstine Island for commercial geoduck farming by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. An article written by Stan Moffett in the *Cascade Crest*, the newsletter of the Cascade Chapter of the Sierra Club, addresses the issue by referring to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Regarding geoduck farming, Moffett states:

"The potential ecological damage is obvious. Of particular concern is that the DNR is accepting bids on beaches identified by Fish and Wildlife as forage fish spawning areas. One of those fishes is the sand lance. The sand lance, whose larvae share a diet with geoducks, is important because it represents 60 percent of the diet of juvenile Puget Sound chinook salmon."

The Washington State Department of Ecology says the following: "Sand lance are important food for young salmon; 35 percent of juvenile salmon diets are composed of sand lance. Juvenile chinook salmon depend on sand lance for 60 percent of their diet." The department adds: "The spawning habitat of sand lance is considered a 'marine habitat of special concern' in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Hydraulic Code Rules." Fish and Wildlife states:

"Sand lances are an important part of the trophic link between zooplankton and larger predators in the local marine food webs. Like all forage fish, sand lance are a significant component in the diet of many economically important resources in Washington. On average, 35 percent of juvenile salmon diets are comprised of sand lance. Sand lance are particularly important to juvenile chinook, where 60 percent of their diets are sand lance."

The thrust of Moffett's article is made clear in his concluding statement: "We encourage our members to contact state officials and the governor and urge that they put a moratorium on this environmentally unsound program of the DNR." A footnote to the article identifies Moffett as the treasurer of the Cascade Chapter Water and Salmon Committee and also gives credit to William Burrows as "senior lecturer emeritus at the University of Washington and a concerned citizen of Harstine Island where the DNR has accepted bids on three acres of public tidelands." Burrows was not cited in the body of the article, but was mentioned in a footnote.