

Geoduck operations still stuck in the mud

By **ARLA SHEPHARD**

Despite obtaining county approval to build a 360-foot log boom for a geoduck nursery at Spencer Cove, Seattle Shellfish still faces obstacles from Case Inlet shoreline homeowners who criticize the project.

The Case Inlet Shoreline Association, which has Mason and Pierce County members from Allyn to Vaughn, has appealed the Mason County hearing examiner's May 26 decision to the state's Shorelines Hearings Board, which has yet to set a hearing date.

Seattle Shellfish has been harvesting shellfish at Spencer Cove for the last decade and had moved

a geoduck nursery from the beach to tidal waters last winter, following environmental and homeowner concerns, said Jim Gibbons, founder of Seattle Shellfish.

The project under consideration would add six 14-by-40-foot rafts and a 360-foot log boom supported by eight 12-inch diameter steel pilings to the nursery.

"Basically, it's to prevent northeast winter storms from ruining the nursery," Gibbons said. "I'd rather not call attention to it because I'm worried about theft ... this wasn't a problem until the NIMBYs called attention to it."

Shoreline homeown-

ers assert that large-scale geoduck operations do not benefit the public.

"They're going to industrialize and commercialize this whole area," said Curt Puddicombe, vice-president of the Case Inlet Shoreline Association. "We have no choice but to fight it. We're at the point now where we are going to fight this as long as we can."

Homeowner Clayton Johnson, who attended the May 11 county hearing, is "unalterably opposed" to the project because the shellfish industry is "one of the least regulated in the state," he said.

"I am uneasy about this whole thing because Case Inlet is a pristine inlet,

and what's going to happen there is that it's no longer going to be a nice cove, it's going to be an industrial area," he said. "I can never be convinced that a beach can be treated like that and returned to normalcy."

In addition to awaiting the Case Inlet association's appeal to their county-granted permit, Seattle Shellfish cannot build its facility without permit approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Army Corps of Engineers has yet to complete its review of the nursery raft system, said Pamela Sanguinetti, project manager and biologist of the Army Corps' Seattle office.

The Sierra Club is fol-

lowing the issue closely, said Laura Hendricks, chair of the shorelines and aquaculture sub-committee of the Cascade chapter of the environmental group.

"We're concerned about the restrictions on the native species in the area, that's really our biggest concern and what precedent this is starting," she said.

Hendricks hopes that the Case Inlet Shoreline Association's attorney will contact the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to get involved, but a DNR spokesperson said that the area in question is on private, and not state, property.