

# Annual seaside celebration promotes clean water

## Taylor Shellfish's Bivalve Bash and popular Low Tide Mud Run scheduled for Saturday

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BOW — Got oysters? Samish Bay is home to millions of them, as well as many other forms of marine life — edible and non. So this coming Saturday, the people who farm the shellfish and work to protect its habitat will throw a big party on the bay's shore to celebrate the bounty, while educating people about its plight.

The 4th annual Samish Bay Bivalve Bash and Low Tide Mud Run, sponsored by Taylor Shellfish Farms and the Skagit Conservation Education Alliance (SCEA), will bring contests, games, live music and food together to promote clean water awareness from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, July 29 at the Taylor Shellfish Farm in Bow.

Entry is \$5, except for children 6 and under and Mud Run participants, who get in free.

The Low Tide Mud Run itself takes quite a toll, though not so much financially as physically.

The race starts exactly at low tide (2:03 p.m.), at which

time 200 runners will make their way around a 250-yard, horseshoe-shaped course in the thick, sticky, dark brown muck — unless, of course, a foot is swallowed by the mud flats, rendering the person immobile as is often the case in this very creative contest.

Hoses are well-used after the race, with winners announced at 2:45 p.m. and receiving ribbons with golden oyster shell medallions before heading off to enjoy the rest of the bash.

Along with barbecued and raw oysters, people will munch on geoducks, clams, scallops and other marine delicacies, some with a wash of wine or locally brewed beer.

Kids are invited to come and run around in the mud, learn about the ocean and explore the beach as well, entering the oyster shell sculpture contest and participating in crab races, oyster shell shuffleboard and trivia games, or splashing around in the kiddie pool.

Youngsters also get to take part in their own 100-yard mud run, which starts at 1 p.m., with awards at 1:50 p.m.

A couple of silent auctions

run throughout the festival as well. The first one opens at 11:30 a.m. and closes at 3 p.m.; the second one opens at 3:45 p.m. and ends at 7 p.m.

Last year 2,000 people came to the event, and more than \$6,500 was raised for SCEA, which educates the general public about the importance of water quality and how to improve it.

Irene McFadden, manager of Taylor's Samish facility, said the event has grown significantly since its debut in 2003, when owner Bill Taylor, of the Taylor family of Shelton, and John Rowley, who works to promote Taylor Shellfish, began brainstorming how to educate people about clean water in an entertaining fashion.

The Bivalve Bash and Low Tide Mud Run was born.

"We estimated about 500 people (attended) the first year and about 1,200 the second year," McFadden said.

As people enjoy the oysters and other seafood, they also learn about threats to the shellfish beds in Samish Bay, and what can be done to ensure harvests for years to come.



photo by Stephanie Kosonen

Participants in the 2005 Mud Run last summer trudge and slog their way through the gushy low tide shoreline.

This year the Splinters from Anacortes and the Atlantics from Bellingham will take turns on the entertainment stage, two bands McFadden said are especially fun to hear because they appeal to a wide audience.

The Samish Bay Invitational Professional Oyster Shucking Championship returns as well, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Returning champions will be present

to defend their titles.

The Taylor farm's retail store will also be open from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., with gift items and seafood for sale.

The store is not accessible for anyone driving in that day, and is only open during event hours.

The only access to the store and the event is by way of the shuttle bus, which will bring

people to and from the beach about every 15 minutes from the Blanchard Chapel parking area located about a mile and a half south of the oyster farm, off Chuckanut Drive.

The Bivalve Bash Web site ([www.bivalvebash.com](http://www.bivalvebash.com)) contains more information, including Mud Run entry forms and directions to the shuttle.