

The Seattle Times

[seattletimes.com/sports](http://seattletimes.com/sports) | SEPTEMBER 28, 2014 | SUNDAY ©

# SPORTS



## Digging razor clams

The best time is two hours before peak low tide. When swells are lower, clams are more likely to be closer to the surface.

### USING A SHOVEL

1. Place shovel perpendicular to the clam's position.

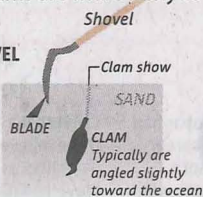
2. Push the shovel blade straight into the sand while dropping to one knee. Keep the blade vertical to keep from breaking the clam shell.

3. Pull the handle back just enough to break the suction in the sand. The sand will crack.

4. Remove sand by diagonally pulling the shovel upward. Repeat this two to three times.

5. After enough sand has been removed to partly expose the shell, use a hand to find and remove the clam.

*NOTE: Razor clams move rapidly downward but not horizontally.*



### USING A CLAM GUN

1. Face the ocean and place the gun tube off-center from the "clam show"

2. Make sure the gun's air hole is open, then drive the gun tube straight down

3. Place thumb or finger over air hole, sealing it, and lift the tube of sand slowly. Wet sand is very heavy. Lift using the legs.

4. Uncover the air hole and shake sand out of the tube.

5. Use hands to sift the sand for the clam.



### REMEMBER:

- A.** The first 15 clams found must be kept regardless of size or condition.
- B.** Each digger must have a 2014-15 fishing license.
- C.** Each digger must have their own bucket or net. No sharing of containers.

Sources: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

## Get your shovels ready: razor clam season near

### OUTDOORS

By MARK YUASA  
Seattle Times staff reporter

**M**ore than half-a-million people will converge along the Washington coast during the fall, winter and spring in search of a bountiful population of razor clams.

On days when digging is open, thousands of diggers can be found poking their noses into the sandy beaches, and this fall and winter is expected to be another standout season.

Rush hour along the 56 miles of razor-clam beaches begins Oct. 7 and goes through New Year's Eve.

State fisheries set a liberal

must have a license.

- During evening low tides, digging is allowed from noon to midnight each day. Morning digs in the spring time are open from midnight to noon.

- Cover holes with sand after digging.

- Wastage kills millions of clams each season. State fisheries says 80 to 90 percent of wasted clams found will die because their shells are broken, necks are cut off or they're improperly replanted into the sand.

### When and where to go

- Long Beach and Twin Harbors will be open Oct. 7-12, Oct. 22-28, Nov. 4-11, Nov. 20-26, Dec. 3-9, Dec. 19-23 and

4-1 digging dates during the first half of the season at Long Beach and Twin Harbors; 19 days at Mocrocks; and seven days at Copalis.

"It's been a really long time since we've offered this many days at Long Beach and Twin Harbors," said Dan Ayres, the head state Fish and Wildlife coastal shellfish manager.

Ayres said additional dates from January through spring will be set. Spring digs, during morning daylight low tides, are usually set by early March.

### Five essentials

The gear for going on a razor-clam outing is relatively inexpensive. In fact, a lot of people will most likely already have gear stored in the closet or garage.

1. To dig, you'll need a clam shovel or razor clam gun (found at most tackle and outdoor stores) with a minimum outside diameter of 4 inches or 4 inches by 3 inches if elliptical.

"What I always tell people who are going for the first time is to have the right tools, and you can't just show up with a garden shovel," Ayres said. "A clam gun is the easiest to use, and doesn't take a lot of practice. If you can't figure it out, just take a look at what others are doing, and most of all, don't be afraid to ask someone for help."

2. Be sure to bring a bucket or clam net.

3. Fall and winter digs occur in the dark, so it is vital to carry a flashlight and lantern. If you bring the kids, keep them closely by your side.

4. During fall and winter, it's a good idea to have a waterproof jacket and rain pants, and a layer of warm clothes underneath.

5. Rubber boots or waders are important while walking along sandy and wet beaches. Often, diggers venturing to the surf line will encounter big puddles of standing water and the rush of incoming waves.

### Regulations

- The daily limit is 15 clams. Diggers must keep the first 15 dug.
- Diggers need to keep clams in their own bucket or clam net. Sharing is illegal.
- Diggers age 15 and older

Dec. 31.

- Mocrocks is open Oct. 10-12, Oct. 24-26, Nov. 7-9, Nov. 21-23, Dec. 5-7, Dec. 19-21 and Dec. 31.

- Copalis is open Oct. 11, Oct. 25, Nov. 8, Nov. 22, Dec. 6, Dec. 20 and Dec. 31.

- Kalaloch Beach is closed due to low populations. Final approval is announced a week before the dates, pending marine toxin tests.

Beaches are located near seaside towns like Westport, Tokeland, Seabrook, Ocean Shores, Moclips and Long Beach that offer amenities and places to stay.

Those new to the sport can take guided clam-digging tours at Iron Springs Resort on Copalis Beach. Cost is \$55 per adult and \$25 per child. Packages include tour, license, gear, instruction and more. Accommodations aren't included.

### Finding clams

The best digging occurs about one to two hours before low tide.

Head to the water's edge and look for "shows" — indentations called dimples, keyholes or doughnut holes. The bigger the hole, the bigger the clam.

Many try their luck right on the surf line where the clam necks will be literally sticking out of the sand. The exposed siphon is the darkest colored part of the neck, and is used to gather food and nutrients from the seawater.

Some diggers will stomp on the sand to see where the clams spew water.

Be sure to dig quickly — clams will burrow down if disturbed. Most can be found 6-24 inches under the sand.

### Cleaning and preparing clams

Clean clams as soon as possible. They don't have to be left in water to purge sand like other clams. Keep them cool by placing them in a refrigerator or putting them on ice right away.

### ON THE WEB



Follow fishing news in Mark Yuasa's blog [seattletimes.com](http://seattletimes.com)

/reeltime northwest