

SUMMARY FOR SPECIAL REPORT:

Damage to commercial shellfish by scoters
and scaups in a southern Puget Sound inlet

D. L. Campbell

12.10.34 Farm-raised clams are consumed by the large populations of sea ducks wintering in the shallow inlets of southern Puget Sound. Ducks causing the most damage are white-winged scoters (*Melanitta deglandi*), surf scoters (*M. perspicillata*) and greater scaups (*Aythya marila*). Most clam beds produce Manila (steamer) clams (*Tapes semicecussaia*) with typical production of about 20,000 pounds per acre per year and a wholesale value of \$1.25 per pound. Olympic oysters (*Ostrea lurida*) also fall prey to the ducks. The Animal Damage Control wing of the United States Department of Agriculture has prepared a 25-page report on the problem. Here are the conclusions of that report:

"Discussions and Conclusions: The data collected indicate that scoters and scaups feed on commercially farmed shellfish and reduce the potential commercial productivity and value of commercially farmed shellfish in southern Puget Sound inlets that they occupy during winter. Assuming that about 3,000 ducks occupy Totten Inlet for about five months annually (3,000 ducks x 150 days = 450,000 duck days) and that individual ducks consume at least 100 grams of commercial Manila clams daily, these ducks consume over 99,000 pounds of commercial Manila clams each year. Since Manila clams wholesale at \$1.25 per pound, this is a loss to shellfish growers in Totten Inlet of over \$123,000 annually. Some previous collections have indicated that individual ducks eat 12 or more commercial size clams a day (D. McMillin, personal communication). When ducks consume large quantities of clams and wintering populations are higher than average, the losses of clams to sea ducks probably exceeds several hundred thousand dollars annually in this inlet. In addition, losses of small noncommercial size clams to ducks causes a serious reduction in clam production in later years."

Source: Special Report: Damage to commercial shellfish by scoters and scaups in a southern Puget Sound inlet. Review and status. D. L. Campbell (USDA, Animal Damage Control, 3625 93rd Avenue, S.W. Olympia, WA 98502, 1-206-753-9400), J. G. Oldenburg and R. M. Engeman. July 1987.