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Saving the geoduck from the sexually hungry

NEW YORK -- An environmental group has taken up the cause of protecting a giant clam that is indigenous to Washington's Puget Sound from Asians who savor the shellfish as an aphrodisiac.

The clam known as a geoduck, pronounced 'gooeyduck,' is a long-necked shellfish that can reach up to more than a foot in length with a shell that does not reach around its body.

For generations Washingtonians have dug the mollusk for use in chowders and fritters.

'The geoduck is threatened with extinction due to a voracious international appetite for aphrodisiacs,' the Save the Geoduck Committee said in a statement released Tuesday in New York.

The committee said that Japanese have been 'devouring' the geoduck 'raw as sushi and in powdered form as a purported aphrodisiac.'

Japanese and other Asian people 'have had to supplement their voracious appetite for sexually arousing diets with the Puget Sound geoduck, hailed for its aphrodisiac qualities and its extraordinary muscular elasticity,' the group said.

The organization was trying to 'heighten Asian and American consciousness about the senselessness of species eradication.'

Washington State has allowed the harvest of some 165 million pounds a year, worth $115 million.

The statement said its protest is directed against American shellfish divers, the U.S. Department of Fisheries, Asian importers and the Japanese people at large.

But the committee called off a planned protest in front of the Japan Society, saying that it did not want to become a party to the current 'frenzied orgy of Japan-bashing' by the U.S. government and the media over trade issues.