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Please see attached. We need to work together to save this forest.

Thank you.

Gregory Books

This is an environmental analysis of the approx. 30 acres between Sunset Ave and Bartel Rd. in Eastsound WA. currently owned by OPAL, previously owned by Klein.

This ecosystem needs to be preserved, not changed into high-density housing.

The zoning should not be changed.

My name is Gregory Books, and I'm uniquely qualified to make this analysis. I have a Masters Degree in Environmental Science, specializing in using avian ecology to reflect human impacts. I also have professional experience with the U.S. Forest Service, The Department of Energy, and private forest companies in environmental analysis and management. I am also a resident landowner on an adjoining property and have studied the forest and its inhabitants for 15 years.

This forest needs to be preserved, not turned into another housing development.

The forest is a healthy mixed-age coniferous forest. There is no evidence of intentional replanting after old-growth removal. Natural succession has occurred with no obvious human intervention. There is evidence of severe wind damage in the past, showing the importance of not removing more trees. Their interconnecting roots protect the ecosystem from excessive wind damage.

Currently there is a healthy, forest of Douglas Fir, Western Hemlock, Red Cedar and Red Alder. The undergrowth is dominated by salal, ferns and nettles. A variety of other northwest plants are present. Most of the over-story is about 150-200 years old, some of the cedars are much older.

The distribution of alders and cedar show ground water flowing SW to NW, emerging into the ocean through a steep shore-line cliff. Compaction from development will have a negative impact on this natural flow.

Wildlife is abundant with typical birds and mammals common to the Northwest. Populations are active and thriving. This is a functional ecosystem.

The health of any ecosystem is reflected in the populations of top of the food chain consumers, based on the observation that for them to be thriving, the supporting ecosystem is also thriving. In this forest, populations of top of the food chain species including Barred Owls, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and mink indicate the presence of stable food species and the necessary supporting habitat for them. Several species of wood-peckers indicate a thriving habitat for forest invertebrates, and their supporting habitat.

There is little to no evidence of destructive, invasive wildlife such as European Starlings or English Sparrows, both of which are starting to become established in urban areas of Eastsound.

In summary, this is a healthy, natural forest which needs preserving.

In the larger picture, this forest is part of a dwindling ecosystem being changed into human habitation. This change reduces natural distribution of plants and animals causing the forest ecosystem to degrade.

This particular forest is a significant link between remaining natural ecosystems across the narrow region in Orcas Island's middle. This is also the area of the most intense urban growth. The continuing

urbanization of this area will significantly degrade ecosystem links between the eastern and western lobes of Orcas Island.

Although hosting no rookeries or endangered species, this forest is significant in preserving this natural link. Additional human encroachment will further fragment the remaining natural forest, inhibiting natural ecosystem functions. Invasive species will supplant native ones and ecosystem degradation will continue.

The only human impacts on this forest at this time are the surrounding homes. In this perimeter to the north and west, and to a lesser degree east, has mowed lawns, paved driveways, pets, noise, etc. associated with human urbanization. There is also significant noise pollution from aircraft coming and going from the nearby airport.

In conclusion, the best course of action for this healthy, natural forest ecosystem is to leave it alone and not subject it to further human encroachment. This will maintain habitat corridors, avoid fragmentation of natural ecosystems, and maintain forest resilience to wind.

In my opinion, we have reached the carrying capacity of Orcas Island, and facilitating more urbanization is to be avoided. Resources and ecosystems have been taxed to the carrying capacity. No more urbanization is the wise management plan.

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