

Sophia Cassam

From: Maryse Sagewynd <maryse@upperleftcoast.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 18, 2022 9:12 PM
To: Comp Plan Update; Sophia Cassam; Lynda Guernsey
Subject: Comprehensive Plan Update comments
Attachments: Comments on Change Request 18-0008.docx

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Hello there,

Please forward the attached letter to the Planning Commission for the meeting on Friday, August 19th. I realize that it is late, but I wish this to be part of the record of comments.

Thank you very much.

Maryse Sagewynd

564 Sunset Avenue, Eastsound WA

Regarding Comprehensive Land Use Review Request (Orcas) #18-0008 and its potential re-zoning:

While this request has apparently been withdrawn just recently, I submit these comments for any future re-consideration of re-zoning and developing these woods.

This particular parcel is undeveloped, mixed-species old forest, designated as Rural Residential, not within the UGA. (This is a significant, intact remnant woods which is really a part of larger woods to the south of Bartel Road, which are all heavily relied upon by wildlife. Without these woods, wildlife near Eastsound will have nowhere safe to raise young or retreat from human contact.)

This Change Request was made by the former owner (Klein) because of his stated long-standing desire to make maximum profit from this wooded acreage by changing its “zoning” designation to allow dense housing.

(By the time the planning commission decided to consider this 2018 request, the applicant no longer owned the parcel, and this change request should have become moot since the applicant no longer had standing.)

Development of this wooded acreage would be another instance of **Sprawl** outside the UGA.

This is one of many examples of “**spot zoning**” which would benefit one landowner (to the detriment of surrounding landowners) and which is not supposed to be allowed. There needs to be enough relative permanence to zoning areas so that those purchasing land and homes can count on their surroundings being stable and not changing on the desires and whims of ever-changing ownership around them. This uncertainty causes stress, anxiety, loss of trust and confidence in governance.

Development of woods endangers the safety of the public in many ways.

According to the Soil Survey of San Juan County, the **soil** in these woods is designated as ***Indianola loamy sand, warm, 3 to 15-percent slopes*** (#3015). This is glacial outwash (glacial till), with countless rocks, freely draining, and therefore water moves easily through it. The loose nature of the sandy soil is held together by massive root systems and millenia of decaying organic matter from trees and vegetation. Past a few inches of plant matter, there is but loamy sand and then just sand past 17 inches down.

This entire area would be very unstable without its current tree cover.

My abutting location is to the north of this parcel, on the downhill slope. (This area is already subject to loss of some soil by the neighboring parcel to my north – owned by Klein – which sits on a cliff above the beach near the end of Sunset Avenue. The cliff is eroding and slumping from each winter storm, and shoreline trees collapse to the beach.)

If this forest is not left intact, and is logged for development, the soil will quickly begin to **erode** – by gravity, by normal water movement under soil, by rain and storms, by wind.

Without the intact forest, the trees on neighboring properties (which are part of the same forest system) will decline and become vulnerable to wind storms and

hot soil (due to lack of tree canopy) which also kills soil life large and tiny, and disease.

This area will suffer increased effects of heating, adverse weather, and fire danger.

Without the intact forest to absorb and mitigate the impacts of wind, storms and heavy rain, or deflect snow blowing in, the small local ecosystem around the woods will change. For my property in particular, it will no longer be buffered from heavy wind and snow, and the little embankment behind my house will suffer erosion from water movement through the soil. In summer, the heat will intensify further, affecting my own trees and gardens. Without the cool of this large forest, everything around will become hotter and more exposed, increasing danger of forest fire. In rainy periods, this forest is a sponge for water; even moss on the sides of trees hold water. All of that moisture retention would be lost and surrounding homes in danger of burning.

Trees **sequester carbon** and increase our resilience to the impacts of climate change which we are already feeling; this forest gives increased resilience to wildfires, plant and animal biodiversity, hydrologic stability, and nutrient recycling.

The county claims several goals in its long-range projects, which would not be served if these woods were re-zoned for development:

“ . . . protect the health, safety and welfare of the public by ensuring that areas susceptivel to geological and hydrological hazards are not developed in a manner which would result in injury, loss of life, property damage or financial losses due to flooding, erosion, landslide, or steep slope failures”

“Encourage the creation of a county-wide carbon sequestration program.”

“ . . . conserve forest lands and promote the retention and preservation of forest stands that are particularly important to visual aesthetics, wildlife habitat, groundwater retention and/or site stability. . . . Protect and preserve . . . critical . . . terrestrial wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors, including breeding grounds, resting and feeding areas for migratory birds, nursery areas and habitats . . .”

“ . . . functional environmental benefits such as improved air quality, carbon sequestration, temperature regulation, and stormwater management [S]tewardship activities on forested lands . . . that result in increased . . . aquifer recharge, reduced wildfire risks, and reduced erosion.”

All of the above are qualities that these woods provide especially so close to town that would be destroyed by development.

Even with some trees still in place, since this is a sandy slope, downhill properties will be affected by **septic system contamination**, run-off from applications of **herbicide** or **pesticides** and other **chemicals**, and **increased water run-off**.

Noise flows downhill and is a problem for people and animals alike.

These woods, despite undergoing some selective logging at the turn of the last century, could be defined, according to the Washington Department of Natural Resources, as **Old Growth**: “Old Growth is a forest that originated prior to 1850, is structurally complex, and spans at least five contiguous acres.” At the very least, it is a “**Legacy Forest**,” defined as naturally regenerated mixed-species forest, selectively harvested before the 1940s, now on a healthy trajectory to Old Growth.”

TREES: Cedar. Douglas Fir. Grand Fir. Hemlock. Sitka Spruce. Red Alder. Big-Leaf Maple. Hawthorn. Holly. (Alders are particularly important to be included because of their atmospheric nitrogen-fixing qualities and their contributions to the fertility of soil life.)

UNDER-STORY: Ocean Spray. Red Elderberry. Salal. Ferns. Salmonberry. Thimbleberry. Oregon Grape. Huckleberry. Plus various Groundcovers.

We are past the eras where we looked at nature mainly in terms of its resources that humans could harvest for their own desires. Certain trees were “board feet,” others were “weeds” to be eliminated. Animals were meat, skin, slaves, or pests to be obliterated. We cannot afford to continue with this old perspective, lest we lose the little that remains.

There are significant adverse impacts to quality of life for wildlife, for the habitat and privacy of animals and their reproduction. These woods are used as a nesting home for many species of birds who visit only during nesting season as well as year-round residents (including Bald Eagles, Heron, hawks, owls, and so many others). I can't tell you how many countless birds we enjoy seeing especially each summer who frequent these woods (which my property is part of). These woods are home to deer (who are now shy and reclusive since last year's fatal viral epidemic killed so many), raccoons, squirrels, mink, rodents, bats, lizards, even sea otters occasionally. Without the safety, seclusion and peace afforded by this woods intact and shielded from human impacts, the animals, the wildlife living here can no longer rely on this refuge for living and reproducing and foraging. This woods is a source of food as well.

Even if some trees are left standing but most of the woods is cut down, the integrity and complexity of forest life will be ruined. Once people start using this as a park, the pounding of feet and bicycles and dogs and noise and commotion and littering and cutting of branches – all the destruction that comes with human presence – will destroy this place as a wildlife nursery, a place of refuge, a place where migrating birds will come. It will all stop.

When a community is blessed with a valuable asset like this which has taken millenia to evolve, it is high folly to damage and destroy it, for whatever reasons.

And, in fact, these woods in particular ought to be purchased by the county and/or Land Bank and preserved in perpetuity.