



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 15, 2009

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KITSAP CO. NEARSHORE STUDY FAILS TO SHOW HABITAT HARM

An independent scientific review of the East Kitsap County Nearshore Habitat Assessment and Restoration Prioritization Framework shows, unequivocally, that the data underlying the report fails to demonstrate any meaningful connection between man-made alterations to the shoreline and the nearshore ecosystem functions – a finding that flatly contradicts the Nearshore Study authors’ contention that “The Nearshore Assessment builds a scientifically defensible framework for assessing the potential effects of changes to nearshore ecological functions caused by human modifications to nearshore habitats.”

A review of the Bainbridge Island Nearshore Assessment produced similar results. These reviews bring into question the justification for *any* nearshore restorations, or the need to impose *any* shoreline buffer zones in the upcoming Shoreline Master Program (SMP) updates.

A recent series of news articles have discussed Kitsap County’s plans to update their SMP over the next three years. The result will be a Department of Ecology approved plan to “restore” shorelines. The SMP goal is to ensure “no net loss” of ecological function. In other jurisdictions where these plans are further along, such as Jefferson Co., Ecology is asking for shoreline buffers of 150 ft. or more. However, any restrictions on shoreline property are required to be supported by an analysis of human-caused cumulative impacts, or stressors, on ecological functions, such as salmon habitat -- i.e. the Nearshore Analysis.

Bainbridge Island scientist Dr. Donald Flora performed the review using a standard statistical technique known as linear regression analysis. He found that supposed stressors demonstrated no significant effect on habitat. Dr. Flora’s analysis was itself peer-reviewed and found credible.

These results were not entirely unexpected. Dr. Flora has accomplished exhaustive review of existing studies of bulkheads, buffers, and other man-made alterations to shorelines to see what evidence exists of correlation to habitat damage. His findings show a remarkable absence of hard scientific evidence of impacts. Indeed, he has numerous recommendations for the scientific studies that are needed to fill these gaps. His work leaves the county in the untenable position of attempting to impose additional restrictions on shorelines in the upcoming SMP update, without a scientific basis for doing so.

The implications to shoreline property owners are enormous. Kitsap County has more than 250 miles of shoreline, with an estimated value of \$2 billion. Imposing buffers of 150 ft. or more would impact most shoreline property owners. Existing structures encroaching on these buffers would become non-conforming. The Department of Ecology has stated their long-term goal is to eliminate these non-conformances. This will be done through stringent repair and replacement rules and the skyrocketing cost of insurance policies. If you abandon your house, it cannot be rebuilt later. If your house burns or suffers major earthquake damage, and you do not apply for a permit within 6 months, or complete the restoration within two years, it cannot be rebuilt. Ecology's ultimate goal is to restore much of the shoreline to its natural, pristine condition. They plan to do this without compensation to property owners.

Without clear scientific justification, the Kitsap County commissioners must resist the pressure of environmental groups and the state to use the SMP process to arbitrarily strip people of the ability to use their land.

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