

Editor:

It is hard for me to comprehend the direction that it appears the City Council for Bainbridge Island is taking in regards to shoreline and environmental protection. The constant input from a minority of City residents, primarily shoreline property owners, has apparently influenced the direction the Council feels it needs to go as they review and prepare regulations for the Shoreline Master Plan and now apparently changes to regulations concerning environmentally sensitive inland critical areas and wetland habitat.

As an environmental scientist I continue to keep abreast of the critical issues that impact the health of Puget Sound, as well as the global concerns for quality air, and water that are the life support systems not only for wildlife but for the residents that must use these resources to survive and function as healthy human beings. It appears that the overriding influence concerning environmental regulations is being driven by greed and the need to protect the economic value of property above the health of the region. Arguments are being presented to the City Council based on hearsay and with no scientific evidence from research and documented data to verify the claims.

Perhaps the most abused argument against environmental regulation is the claim that property values are declining due to these regulations. If environmental regulation of the shoreline prepared and implemented in 1996 caused a decline in property values then the incredible increase in the appraised value of property between 1996 and 2006 must be the result of some impact other than what is being argued currently concerning shoreline regulations. The current changes in property values are directly related to the economic downturn that we have experienced since 2006. Currently property values are once again rising and sales of property are increasing. False arguments are taking precedence over the indisputable facts concerning the decline in the health of the fish and wildlife populations of Puget Sound. If we have a healthy fish population why have the regulators banned the harvest of rock fish in Puget Sound? Why are salmon fishermen allowed to harvest only hatchery salmon for the very short fishing seasons in Puget Sound? Only when an unusual ocean survival occurs is there a season for wild Chinook or coho salmon. The research that has been done over several years throughout Puget Sound clearly shows the impact of habitat degradation. This is true for inland and shoreline properties alike. Storm water runoff from yards and streets is killing returning adult salmon as well as the juveniles that start their life cycle in the streams and rivers of Puget Sound. The chemicals that reach the water from the material that is used to create a lush yard of grass and decorative plants are part of the problem as well as the chemicals that runoff from the streets due to automotive and truck emissions'.

The continued demand for docks and bulkheads on the shoreline will only add to the impact that has already occurred from vegetation removal and the use of chemicals in our yards. There is recent documented data showing the impact of chemical changes in the water quality of the ocean and of Puget Sound due to increased carbon in the atmosphere. The result is an increase in the acidity of the Sound and the ocean that is killing shell fish and destroying the coral reefs along our coast line. This will add to the impact of the chemicals that are reaching the sound from our shorelines and watersheds. We can continue to bury our heads in the sand and enjoy our unobstructed view of Puget Sound or we can become partners in our efforts to make an effort to see that Orca whales can depend on this region for the salmon they need to survive.

Wayne Daley  
Bainbridge Island, WA