

May 8, 2013

Members of the City Council,

This past Monday night I attended a presentation of “Science Open Mic” at the Treehouse Café, where we heard two scientists from the Department of Ecology speak about their long-term Puget Sound water quality monitoring program called “Eyes Over Puget Sound.” The Department has data going back to 1973. What these scientists are now seeing is a trend in increasing nitrate concentrations in Puget Sound and a shift away from the classic marine food chain I learned about as an oceanographer – diatom – zooplankton – fish, to a more complex and less fish friendly food chain with dinoflagellates (those organisms that make up many of the colored blooms in the summer) at the base, many fewer diatoms, and many more steps and energy losses before getting to fish. They left elaboration on this to a later talk, but did say that it’s a pattern seen in other degrading estuaries. This was shocking news to me – a systemic shift in the Puget Sound food web away from diatoms and fish?

That same night I heard from our table companion that he has lived on Pt. White for 20 years, and in that time the beach in front of his house has gone from being so full of living creatures that he could hardly avoid crunching or squishing something as he walked out on the cobble at low tide, to a place where the rocks are barren and the water is clear.

Both observations bring me to the cold realization that time is short for us to rescue this body of water that defines so much of our lives. And so tonight I ask two things of you:

- Please end picking away at and weakening the provisions of this SMP, which has received so much review and public input, and send it on to Ecology for their review, so that we can finally move on with an updated SMP in place.
- Once we have that SMP, its success at accomplishing the goal of “no net loss” of ecological functions will be entirely dependent on how we implement the provisions, and how we monitor the results in our shorelines to know if we are truly achieving “no net loss.” Without a firm commitment to staffing and funding implementation and monitoring (including the analysis of the monitoring data) we will be no further along in protecting the Sound or making intelligent changes in our SMP the next time around.

The future health of Puget Sound is an investment for our children and for our property values (if that is what moves you). We are all capable of doing our part to abide by regulations that lessen our impact on the important shoreline habitats that surround our Island. Protection of the Sound is something we all agree on. Let's get on with it.

Marcia Lagerloef
10426 NE South Beach