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**To:** [Anne Blair](#); [Sarah Blossom](#); [Steve Bonkowski](#); [Kirsten Hytopoulos](#); [Debbi Lester](#); [Bob Scales](#); [David Ward](#)  
**Cc:** [PCD](#)  
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Dear City Council Members,

I was signed up to speak last night at the SMP hearing, but my name was passed over by mistake. After the meeting Mayor Bonkowski confirmed this and then encouraged me to send in comments via email, so here they are.

Last night's hearing was part of the practice of democracy - not always a pretty sight, but perhaps the best we have. Though I brought no preconceived notions to the meeting about what is right or wrong, or good or bad, with respect to the new SMP, I was struck most profoundly by the negative arguments put forward by the SMP's opponents which fit comfortably into the anti-regulatory, 'do nothing' political discourse offered in many arenas by a small but vocal minority. Over the course of the evening we heard the following arguments - repeatedly:

- The SMP process was faulty and biased;
- The science doesn't support it;
- It will cost too much;
- It will kill property values;
- It threatens our "freedoms" and property rights;
- It won't solve the problem.

It is important the council not fall prey to any of these tired and fear-based arguments which are most often put forward to stifle debate, to stymie progress, and to prevent positive action when the facts are not in your favor. I can help a bit here with those facts, though I suspect they're familiar to all of you:

1. The process to create these SMP improvements lasted more than three years and involved literally dozens of public meetings, working groups, and opportunities for citizen engagement. Was the process perfect? Maybe not. Was it sufficient for a community like Bainbridge to create a draft to send to the state for consideration? Absolutely.
2. The vast majority of peer reviewed science supports action to protect beach and near-shore marine environments through regulations that manage and limit coastal and shoreline development. This is why we have the state law in the first place. From comments offered last night, it appears we have a "middle of the road" set of management prescriptions and it is likely the science supports an even more aggressive approach.
3. There's no such thing as a free lunch. I have lived in a variety of locations across the US in my fifty years and in all those places paid more in taxes than I do here living on Bainbridge. Taxes are the price we pay to live in a state of civilization (I suggest living in Sudan for anyone not interested in paying them). Bainbridge is a wealthy community in the wealthiest of nations. We can and should pay what it costs to protect our environment in a way that future generations (and the critters of Puget Sound) will appreciate and thank us for.
4. Development proponents have made the case for decades that regulations depress

property values. Hardly any reasonable examples exist which support this claim. In the vast majority of cases, environmental regulations enhance property values by insuring that the amenity which often brought the homeowner there in the first place is protected. The proposed SMP regs will ultimately contribute to making shoreline residents on Bainbridge the most direct beneficiaries of a healthier marine environment.

5. What rights any of us have as property owners are granted to us through our governments. Where the exercising of my rights gets to the point of infringing upon the rights of my neighbors, government has always stepped in to insure that the larger community's values are protected - especially when it comes to clear air and clean water. The constitutional basis for this activity has been confirmed repeatedly, thus making the "freedom" argument a myth.
6. Lastly, there are many things which contribute to the somewhat less than stellar ecological health of Puget Sound. Many have been the focus of intense programmatic activity for decades, with literally hundreds of millions of dollars spent. The easy stuff came first (point sources, ag runoff, etc.) and we're now getting to the point where our own behavior as watershed residents has become the regulatory focus. It's not longer "them"; it's "us". The SMP is not the only thing we are doing and shoreline property owners are not being singled out. From the CAO to stormwater controls, we all bear some responsibility for the health of the Sound, and we should all be doing more, not less. Incremental progress is still progress, and not a basis for checking our responsibilities at the door.

Lastly I will emphasize that most of us have chosen to live on Bainbridge because it is a place of extraordinary beauty, and a place where we share common values with our neighbors to be among the best communities in Washington (if not the US) in which to live and work. We don't want an "average" high school, a "typical" main street of chain retailers, or an "average" environment. Our standards are high - not in a luxury sense, but in practical appreciation for better ways of doing things, in getting the most out of what we do spend, and in getting our hands dirty to make a difference in our community. Given those values, we should be among the leaders in the Puget Sound region in coming up with regulations for our shoreline development that will have a positive impact. "No net loss" is not particularly inspirational in that regard but it is a start. And we really need to get started, so please vote next week to send the SMP on to the Department of Ecology for review.

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