



SQUAXIN ISLAND TRIBE

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April 14, 2023

Eric Baker
Deputy County Administrator
614 Division St, MS-36
Port Orchard, WA 98366
Email: ebaker@kitsap.gov; compplan@kitsap.gov

Re: Comprehensive Plan 2024 Update Preliminary Alternatives

Dear Mr. Baker,

We would like to first express appreciation to you and your staff for early and regular communication about Kitsap County's comprehensive plan update. This regular outreach has helped us understand the complicated mandates that are faced by Kitsap County. The Squaxin Island Tribe's concerns for the rural areas on the south end of the County are directly tied to development patterns in its cities and urban growth areas.

Interests of the Squaxin Island Tribe

Watersheds that drain the southern end of Kitsap County, in to Case and Carr Inlet, are the Squaxin Island Tribe's usual and accustomed fishing area ("U&A") (United States v. Washington, 384 F.Supp. 312, 377-378 (W.D. Wash. 1974) and 626 F.Supp. 1405, 1441-1442 (W.D. Wash. 1985)). Since time immemorial, the Tribe has lived, hunted, fished and gathered in and around these watersheds. Anadromous fish, and particularly salmon, have played a central role in the Tribe's subsistence, economy, culture, spiritual life and day-to-day existence. The Tribe is adjudicated to be a successor-in-interest to signatories of the Treaty of Medicine Creek, 10 Stat. 1132 (hereinafter "Treaty"), by which the Tribe reserved various rights, including the right to exercise off-Reservation fishing rights at its U&A". *Therefore, the fate of freshwater in Kitsap County is of great concern to the Tribe.*

Preliminary Alternative Descriptions

We understand that you are using these alternatives as bookends for environmental review. We expect to favor Alternative 2: Compact growth/Urban center focus. Part of our strategy for survival of salmon in South Puget Sound is to preserve the best habitat that remains for those species. For Squaxin U&A, that includes the rural areas of southern Kitsap County. Increased growth in rural areas is contrary to that strategy. Concentrated growth in urban areas and disincentivizing growth in rural areas will help maintain salmon habitat in rural areas. Allowing increased density in rural areas (like, for example, upzoning from RR1/10 to RR1/5) causes habitat fragmentation for terrestrial and aquatic life.

**Relationship of the Comprehensive Plan to the
WRIA 15 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Draft Plan**

“The purpose of the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 15 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan is to identify projects and actions intended to offset the impacts of new domestic permit-exempt (PE) wells to streamflows. The Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan is one requirement of RCW 90.94.030. Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plans must identify projects to offset the projected consumptive impacts of new PE domestic groundwater withdrawals on instream flows over 20 years (2018-2038) and provide a net ecological benefit (NEB) to the WRIA.”

The Squaxin Island Tribe did not approve this plan, partly because of lack of commitment of Kitsap County and the Washington State Department of Ecology to find projects and to implement the plan. But some version of this plan is under review by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), and the SRFB will make recommendations to Ecology for modification and approval. Kitsap County will still have to implement a version of this plan. If, based on the County’s preliminary alternatives for the comprehensive plan, their projections of rural permit-exempt wells change, the County should update the WRIA 15 plan projections.

Furthermore, the County should quantify rural groundwater extraction as an impact in its environmental review for the three alternatives. The WRIA 15 plan provides a road map to do that. We will continue to engage with Kitsap County about preventing proliferation of rural permit-exempt wells and about offsetting their impacts with restoration projects.

Sincerely,



Erica Marbet
Water Resources Biologist
Squaxin Island Tribe