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May 1, 2012

Skagit County Planning & Development
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon 98273
Attn: Kirk Johnson

Re: PL11-0250

It would be a grave loss to the citizens of Skagit County if P1968 does not retain its present status of Rural Resource-Natural Resource (RRc-NRL) and is rezoned Rural Reserve (RRv) as proposed in PL11-0250. To approve this redesignation because of the technicalities that the parcel lacks five acres and is not enrolled in the forest open space taxation plan should be re-examined. This parcel is one of the last and rare undeveloped land tracts on Fidalgo Island. It also has proven to be a regenerative and productive forest. The applicant disputes the latter, arguing that the land parcel is not supportive for forestry use "as seedlings have a high mortality rate...". However, the aerial photo provided and ground level inspection indicates tree growth over the entire parcel. Presumably this forestation could only have arisen from successful establishment of seedlings and their subsequent growth. Moreover, it is readily evident that where space and light are available, there are numerous small trees (often in close proximity) in varying growth stages (Figs. 1-3). Further evidence of forest regeneration is that trees within this parcel are consistent with a Pacific coastal forest succession. Various species of hardwoods including Western red cedar are present. In locations where large timber are clustered, the forest floor lacks vegetation (with the exception of ferns) consistent with the inability of sunlight to penetrate the forest canopy. Large tree stumps, from decades-post logging are scattered throughout the tract (Figs 4-6).

Parenthetically, the presence of red cedar particularly near Rosario Rd must underscore the importance of this tree variety in tract drainage, ground water control and the precarious stability of the nearby western canyons (Fig. 7)..

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If P19168 redesignation to RRv is granted, the applicant seeks to "increase housing choices in the area which will provide a high quality of life". While perhaps a lofty goal, its execution must be tempered by present day economic realities. The housing market is distressed. Numerous houses in every price category are available for rent, lease or purchase (Fig. 8).

Respectively, I would request that the Commission deny PL11-0250. Please allow P19168 to remain and serve as a forestry natural resource for future generations in Skagit County - rather than be sacrificed for a five acre shortfall and no present need for additional residential housing in South Fidalgo.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arlene R. Wechezak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Arlene" and last name "Wechezak" clearly distinguishable.

Arlene R Wechezak PhD

Attachments (3)



Fig 1. Robust growth of three Douglas Fir saplings.



Fig.2 Six young conifers of varying height.



Fig. 3 Young tree growing adjacent to mature timber trees.



Fig. 4 Douglas Fir and Western red cedar.



Fig. 5 Stand of red cedar, old logging stump and forest floor with limited vegetation.



Fig. 6 Logged Douglas Fir stump flanked by free-standing cedar tree and smaller cedar growing from stump.



Fig. 7 Water pooling on access road into P19168 near Rosario Rd. (Photo taken 05/01/12)



Fig. 8 For sale signs on Rosario Rd approximately 0.8 mile south of P19168