

PLANNING COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION  
Shoreline Master Program  
October 3, 2013 - 12 noon

Commissioners Present: Todd Voth, Todd Lengenfelder, Vicki Heimark, Charles Hepburn, Rick Penhallurick, and Nathan Nofziger Absent: Steve Schield, Kevin Starcher, and David Eck

Staff Present: Gilbert Alvarado, Anne Henning, Billie Jo Muñoz, Daniel Leavitt, and Sue Mahaney

Guest: Amy Summe, consultant, Watershed Company

The study session was called to discuss the Cumulative Impacts Analysis for the Shoreline Master Program.

Mr. Hepburn wanted to know what distance from the water does the science indicate that there is zero impact from human use.

Ms. Summe stated that generally the science indicates the first 50' is the most critical and after that there is a diminishing return on the impacts. She mentioned that there are a number of issues that the science looks at to assess the value of the area including habitat, sediment, water quality, fish, etc.

Mr. Hepburn was concerned that the science could be manipulated by the politicians and the Dept. of Ecology to arrive at a formula to establish the setback requirements and felt that the setbacks were more a political effort than a scientific effort.

Ms. Summe stated that they would look at a particular body of water and determine what the issues are, including the current development pattern and existing conditions and determine what is optimal for that body of water. She mentioned that a study has been done on Eastern Washington conditions and the average setback is 50'. She pointed out that the recommendations on buffers is a compilation of the existing science and the existing conditions on site. She pointed out that under the Shoreline Management Act there is to be no net loss of ecological functions and under the Growth Management Act GMA the best available science is to be used to provide the appropriate level of protection for habitat.

Mr. Nofziger mentioned that the report seems to be recommending a 50' wetland buffer could be used for most reaches

Ms. Summe pointed out that the shoreline buffer is measured from the ordinary high water mark around the perimeter of the lake and that any wetlands that extend upland from the shore has a buffer measured from that. The wetland would be rated and the depth of the buffer determined from that rating. She mentioned that in general the wetland buffer is the width of the vegetative functioning area. She also talked about having a structure setback that would maintain the same sort of character and look of the rest of the lake, since in areas where existing houses are set back from the lake, a new house built much closer to the lake would affect the view and potentially the property value of the existing houses.

Mr. Lengenfelder pointed out that docks eliminate some vegetation but also provide shade and protection for fish and felt that there would be a no net loss so did not see how there could be a recommendation that no one can have a dock.

Ms. Summe mentioned that there is no recommendation to disallow docks but that there is a requirement in the WAC that new residential development of two or more units - whether multi-family or single family - has to do a joint use or community dock when feasible in order to reduce the number of docks. She pointed out that there would be double the amount of docks on the lake if everyone had a dock and that would break up the emergent vegetation along the shoreline which has high habitat value in terms of fish and aquatic life and also in terms of water quality, filtration, holding sediment, etc. She pointed out that the WAC requires joint docks when feasible so a joint dock is not mandatory

Mr. Lengenfelder felt that requiring someone to share a dock with a neighbor is not feasible.

Ms. Summe pointed out that the SMP could improve conditions around the lake by not allowing reconstruction of existing docks built parallel to the shoreline. These docks have a lot of impact on the shoreline, so it would be beneficial to not allow them to be rebuilt, but rather require a perpendicular dock instead.

Ms. Heimark pointed out that the amount of vacant property along the lake is minimal.

Ms. Summe mentioned that there really is a significant amount of vacant land to be developed, especially in the shoreline residential resource designation. However, much of this vacant land is in the Urban Growth Area rather than inside city limits. She will revise the tables in the documents to sort by city versus UGA, so it is easier to see where the vacant land is.

Mr. Lengenfelder wanted to know if the wetland buffers would be added to the shoreline buffers.

Ms. Summe mentioned that the buffers would overlap so if there is a wetland adjacent to the lake, whichever buffer was larger would take precedence. She stated that for Moses Lake the actual existing functioning buffer was measured and then they looked at the relationship of the habitat points, the existing conditions, and came up with the buffer widths. She pointed out that the buffer ratios were developed by a cooperative effort through DOE, Corps of Engineers, and the EPA.

The study session adjourned at 1 p.m.