

**From:** [Plancom](#)  
**To:** [Donna M. Moss](#); [Rachael Markle](#); [Steve Szafran](#); [Easton Craft](#); [David Maul](#); [William Montero](#); [Paul Cohen](#); [Lisa Basher](#); [Jack Malek](#); [Laura Mork](#); [Miranda Redinger](#); [donna.moss.thomas@gmail.com](#); [Julie Ainsworth-Taylor](#); [Susan Chang](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Comment on Wetlands Update - 145th Light Rail Station Area Planning  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 17, 2016 1:11:34 PM

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**From:** Megan Kogut[SMTP:MBKOGUT@GMAIL.COM]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 17, 2016 1:11:27 PM  
**To:** Plancom  
**Subject:** Comment on Wetlands Update - 145th Light Rail Station Area Planning  
**Auto forwarded by a Rule**

Dear Planning Commission,

I live at 15806 10<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, about ½ north of the Paramount Open Space. I walk my dogs in the Open Space regularly, and I use the rather grim tractor/tree combination at the south end of the park as a local tourist destination for house guests. I also occasionally jog in Twin Ponds Park.

I write in support of the conclusions of the Otak memo of January 29, 2016 and the accompanying Wetlands and Stream Assessment. I would be at the Planning Commission meeting on Thursday, February 18, if I didn't have a prior commitment out of town that night.

I happen to have a PhD in environmental engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, where I received a well-rounded education in environmental science, including chemistry, limnology and wetland science, microbiology and hydrology. I also took several environmental law and policy courses at the MIT Sloan School of Management and a course in landscape design. As faculty at UW Tacoma, I've created and taught six separate courses related to environmental science, policy, and natural history in the Pacific Northwest.

I roll out my credentials here because I feel that I am well-qualified to say that you don't need much of a science background to appreciate the implications of the Otak report. It is clear that redeveloping the areas around Paramount Open Space, and around Twin Ponds Park, open the door to possibilities for meaningful and significant environmental benefits for those parks and the people who visit them.

As a natural historian, I understand well why single family houses were built on wetlands and riparian areas all over Shoreline and beyond the Growth Management Act was enacted. And I appreciate efforts of those adjacent to the wetlands and creeks to protect those natural assets as if they were their own.

But, the next person who purchases one of those non-conforming properties might not be so like-minded. I feel that going forward, knowing more, we can improve on the past by eventually removing non-conforming structures and landscaping, implementing buffer zones, managing stormwater quality and quantity, taking full advantage of required mitigation for new construction, and creating opportunities for high quality restoration as well as passive recreation.

The Class III and IV wetlands, surrounded by weedy hills and the backyards of houses, have so much potential for aesthetic and functional improvement and better accessibility. They are wetlands that survived by virtue of being difficult to “reclaim”. And I appreciate ongoing volunteer efforts to add paths and remove invasive species. But the Paramount Open Space currently does not fully reflect today’s values for wetland function and passive recreation.

But, it could be a true crown jewel of Shoreline if restored and enhanced. The same possibilities exist for Twin Ponds Park, and creeks around both areas being considered for rezoning.

It may feel to some that tall residential buildings are inappropriate next to wetlands for aesthetic and personal reasons. There is some merit to that argument, but this is not the question at hand.

The question at hand is of course whether mixed use development, conforming to all existing laws and permit conditions, could have a lower impact on the wetlands and riparian areas than the existing use. The answer is clearly yes, in many ways, based on the results of the Otak report as well as common sense.

However, I will still address the question of whether it is inappropriate to put tall buildings next to wetlands for personal or aesthetic objections. I have a personal story of my own that I hope is considered alongside other people’s personal stories.

As you know, the Growth Management Act of 1990 has a clear purpose: to encourage growth within urban areas first. This rezoning, building up not out, is a clear example of fulfilling that purpose. That this rezone is next to some Class III and IV wetlands is a lucky chance to

enhance them. But, ultimately, the purpose of this rezone is to protect more wetlands in rural areas.

My parents moved to a five acre property just outside of Gold Bar, WA, in 1993. A salmon-bearing stream goes through their property, which is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  wetland. The wetland on their property is connected with extensive wetlands in the 100+ acre undeveloped property across the street, owned at one point rather ironically by a subsidiary of Eddie Bauer Inc. Those wetlands are all at least Category 2 if not Category 1 due to their large size and mature trees, since they have been undisturbed since a single logging probably a century ago. They also play a significant role in maintaining water quality and quantity in a salmon-bearing stream. Since about 2003 if not earlier, there has been constant pressure to clear, grade and build on the large property across the street. In fact the lot was partially logged about ten years ago in preparation for subdivision. Because this area is not served by a sewer district, the housing density would probably be around one house per acre due to septic field requirements. That sort of development, in that location, is a huge environmental impact on a higher quality wetland. And it is a huge environmental impact per person compared to a multistory apartment building. And then there are the environmental impacts of heating those large single family houses, commuting a long distance to and from those houses, and so on. Keeping this rural property, and many more like it, undeveloped is the primary motivation for the Growth Management Act. I estimate for the purpose of illustration that the 100 acre property could support 100 households or maybe 400 people. I imagine also that a multistory apartment building could support 400 people, walking distance from local amenities, a light rail station and extensive bus service.

It is time to set the stage to create communities with a far smaller footprint on the environment. And with mitigation and restoration, we can increase the size and quality of our local wetland remnants. We can grow them into relatively high functioning and accessible urban jewels. They would have more benefit to the environment and they would act as living classrooms and restful, safe urban retreats for hundreds, if not thousands of people. I'd even go so far to imagine that someday in the far future, the Paramount Open Space could become a protected but accessible centerpiece of new development, rather than a hidden and at times potentially unsafe open area accessed at the ends of a few dead-end residential streets and trails. The laws and policies related to future development are in place to ensure that happens going forward, especially with robust public support.

I look forward to the future of these urban wetlands. I realize there is no action on this report at this time, but I write in strong support of the Planning Commission eventually accepting the conclusions of the report and recommending that the rezoning will have a net positive effect on both parks overall. I look forward to commenting further and being able to attend meetings regarding this issue in person.

Thank you for your time.

Megan Kogut PhD

15806 10<sup>th</sup> Ave NE