From: Stephen & Virginia Orsini
To: PDS comments
Subject: Replacement Guemes Ferry Proposal
Date: Tuesday, February 13, 2018 3:47:40 PM

I am asking that an EIS be performed on the impact of a larger ferry to Guemes Island. I am asking specifically that the environmental impact of failed or overused SEPTIC SYSTEMS be addressed in the process. This is because a larger ferry will allow more people and development to come and pollute this environment.

I have lived permanently on Guemes Island for thirty years, and I have been coming to the island for nearly 50 years. During that time I have seen the Island change from a quiet sustaining, natural environment, where everyone takes care with their resources, to a place where beaches are overrun in the summer with people who just want to have fun, at the expense of their neighbors, and the resources. Please don't allege that more humans will not degrade a place. The question here is how to minimize the impact, and make people aware of the limited resources of a place so they can take care of them. An Environmental Impact Statement is necessary to give us direction in how to proceed while safeguarding the environment.

The Washington State Growth Management Board has acknowledged that transportation, such as a bigger ferry, will be an invitation for more people to inhabit and visit the island - a designated "Critical Area" with a sole-source aquifer. This means there will be many environmental stresses that will accompany this growth, and one of them will be SEPTIC FAILURES.

We know that salt in the water kills the bacteria that is necessary for the breakdown of effluence. We know that saltwater intrusion is a growing factor we have to deal with on the island, and that many wells are above the acceptable chloride levels. There used to be a county health department that administered the functioning of septic systems, but no more. We also know that many people have old and leaking septic systems, but do not have the resources to replace them. We know that the county seawater and shorelines policies are essentially non-existant, and that drilling a well is still required before someone can develop property instead of deciding on rainwater catchment or other non-degrading, sustainable options.

Every summer we see homes and camping areas with 6-8 cars and 20-40 people on a 50 or 100 foot lot, all using one bathroom. That is not a healthy situation, and it is right on the shoreline. We have seen people wander up the road and visit someone else's outhouse because a toilet is unavailable to them. We know of houses situated right on the shoreline ("low-bank waterfront") that have been built without a building permit, and with drain fields a couple of feet from the beach. These are not developments that are sustaining the environment, and they are not healthy situations.

The Guemes Island Sub Area plan does a good job of explaining these stressed areas, and why development needs to be very controlled. We have seen that people can love a place to death, but it is not a given that this should be. It is the reason the rigors of an Environmental Impact Statement need to be performed, and adhered to when proposing a larger ferry.

I am asking that an EIS be performed on the impact of a larger ferry to this island. And I am asking that the environmental impact of failed or overused SEPTIC SYSTEMS be addressed in the process. This is because a larger ferry will allow more people to come and pollute this environment, and Skagit County does not currently provide any regulations that hold up to the pressures of development.

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