

## **Hidden Beach Community Meeting – August 28, 2018 6pm, Greenbank Farms**

### **Questions and Concerns From the Meeting:**

- Question: Can you put this site in perspective compared to the rest of Puget Sound. Why was this site chosen for restoration?
  - Response: This is one site of many that need restoration actions across Puget Sound. Shoreline armor removal has been prioritized through the Puget Sound Action Agenda as one of vital signs and implementation strategies for recovery of the Puget Sound ecosystem. (<http://psp.wa.gov/implementation-strategies.php>). Opportunities for restoration are greater on public lands and the overall length of the armor removal site, along with the potential for creating a riparian zone make this a strong candidate for restoration.
- Question/Concern: We walk this beach every day, and we disagree that this is not used habitat. We observe many species (birds and mammals) using the beach and vegetation.
  - Response: We agree that there are many species utilizing this environment. We are looking at specific habitat for surf smelt and sand lance spawning which occurs in the mid to upper intertidal range of the beach. These species of fish are key prey for salmon and marine birds. Removal of shoreline armor will enhance the habitat, not detract from those species that currently use the area. We appreciate the knowledge that residents bring of the species you observe and would be interested in obtaining any data you have.
- Question: The pilings are creosote right?
  - Response: Yes, some of the pilings are creosote treated wood. Creosote treated wood/debris leaches chemical compounds into beach and marine sediments causing toxic conditions for organisms that live in and use these areas. For more information about creosote debris and removal visit WA DNR: <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/aquatics/restoration/creosote-removal>
- Question: If you look at the aerial, the area with the largest wood accumulation is Hidden Beach. There is a lot of sediment coming from the cliffs to the north of Hidden Beach, and if that is moving north, where is the sediment coming from to Hidden Beach if it is being blocked by the houses and bulkheads to the south.
  - Response: Net shore-drift is mapped from south to north. Therefore, the net direction of alongshore drift is northward by the predominant (most powerful) and prevailing (more frequently occurring) wind-generated waves. Sediment derived from local bluff erosion that occurs south of Hidden Beach is transported northward around the bulkheads south of Hidden Beach. The bulkheads do not completely block sediment transport, as sediment transport still occurs waterward of the armor. This is the primary sediment source for Hidden Beach, however the beach has been substantially altered over time, due to changes in topography from sluicing the bluff and from the addition of fill and armor. Hidden Beach is also considerably exposed to the north (over 10 miles of fetch), which means that southern sediment transport also likely occurs during northerly storms that occur with less frequency.  
<https://ecology.wa.gov/Research-Data/Monitoring-assessment/Coastal-monitoring-assessment/Projects/Puget-Sound-feeder-bluff/Puget-Sound-feeder-bluff-mapping>

- Question: Your comparisons of natural state and hard fixed armor makes sense. But the site isn't as fixed like vertical sea walls. So those diagrams don't accurately match Hidden Beach, the water still comes in past the structures.
  - Response: Although the structures at Hidden Beach aren't solidly vertical they include both vertical piles with space, rip rap (large boulders) and concrete pillows and rubble that is sloped. The piles and rip rap still have very similar impacts as the diagrams in the presentation. Sediment transport is still happening at Hidden Beach., but the processes have been degraded. The structures at Hidden Beach are impacting the wave energy. When you have considerable structures, such as the ones at Hidden Beach, the wave energy is not absorbed as it would be on a finer grain beach. The intertidal habitat is also buried by the large rocks.
- Question: The forage fish map does not show if there has been sampling at the site, so how do we know if there was sampling conducted and no spawning found?
  - Response: We do not know if previous forage fish sampling has been conducted at Hidden Beach. We do know that WA Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) select sampling sites in areas with suitable spawning habitat. Prior to construction the Island MRC will conduct forage fish surveys at Hidden Beach.
- Question: It sounds like you are saying you need smaller sediment near the top of the beach. I have walked that north area with surf smelt, and the sediment there is the same size as Hidden Beach.
  - Response: The areas to the north and south of Hidden Beach have a good mix of sand and gravel present in the upper beach, much like the type of sediment we would expect to find at Hidden Beach if the derelict shore armor was not present on the beach. The area to the north has a mix of feeder bluffs and transport zones. In those regions it is normal that occasional large boulders and cobbles are present from glacial drop stones and glacial erratics. Much of the Hidden Beach site is covered by the concrete pillows and other debris, burying potential spawning habitat.
- Question: You need to have a healthy prey population to support healthy predator populations. We have had record year of grey whales, orcas, river otters, and porpoises.
  - Response: We don't dispute that these species are using the area, and we want to help build the prey population that helps sustain these species. The project focus is on enhancing habitat specific for forage fish, a key link in the marine food web, and would not negatively impact the presence of the predator species.
- Question: Can you give us an idea of what the current site would be rated (on a scale of 0-100) for habitat and general condition and what it would be improved to? How significant is this restoration in terms of improvement?
  - Response: A regional assessment (Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project) was completed to understand impacts of shoreline armoring to the nearshore and identify opportunities and management strategies to improve nearshore processes. This was done at a scale referred to as a 'Shoreline Process Unit'. For this area, the process unit spans from just north of Freeland to south of Coupeville. For restoration of beaches, the degradation level is identified as medium across the whole unit with high potential for restoration to improve the ecosystem. Removal of over 700 linear feet and of shore armor would provide a measurable benefit to this shoreline process unit.

At the site scale, as noted in the assessment report, there would be substantial benefit and habitat gain through removal of the armor. Nearly an acre of habitat would be regained and enhanced through this project.

- Question/Concern: with the understanding that this entire system wouldn't exist since its artificial, it's reasonable to assume that the people that built the structures initially did it for erosion reasons. Are we increasing the erosion risk by removing these structures? People with capital investments need more security for the impact of the project on their existing capital.
  - Response: The structures as they currently are, are considered failed, and are not acting as erosion control. The intention of the structures initially being placed at Hidden Beach may have been erosion control, but it appears they failed to function properly. It is estimated that the shore armor was in place at this beach by 1968. The coastal geology assessment characterized the southern and middle reaches of the shore armor as having failed by 1990 and the full extent of the armor was failed by 2009 (CGS, 2018).
- Question: How are you going to get the material out? That road isn't in great shape and can't necessarily support large trucks.
  - Response: The removal plan will be determined during the feasibility phase and engineering designs. Removal by barge is an option and has been used on a number of restoration projects in the past. There will be coordination with Island County Public Works to plan the logistics for the project work.
- Question: Can you move rocks to make openings for habitat, but keep most of it for erosion protection?
  - Response: The current state of the structures is not functional erosion control. It is in the best interest of the restoration work, the habitat improvement and the functionality of the beach that all or most of the derelict armor be removed.
- Question: Can you review the scope of the area you are talking about?
  - Response: We are assessing the feasibility of the full 770 feet of shoreline with failed armor. The scope of the restoration work will be determined during the feasibility assessment of specific design options.
- Question: How many parking permits or parking areas are going to be made available? What will the fee be?
  - Response: There will not be permits or parking fees associated with Hidden Beach. The parking area will be assessed during the feasibility stage of the project, and the goal will be to not alter parking capacity.
- Question/Comment: You are using the word construction; do you mean de-construction?
  - Response: Yes, de-construction is probably a better term. This describes the removal of the failed shore armor material, possibly moving parking areas, and removal of the concrete pad. But there is likely some construction as well to re-grade the slope and backshore beach area and create paths.
- Question: Will there be boat access restriction with the vegetation areas? Will access be blocked during construction?
  - Response: When the project is complete there will be paths created that direct foot and non-motorized boat traffic along the paths. There will likely be a short period during the construction where access is blocked for public safety from a construction site.

- Question: The wind exposure is strong winter winds, what was the exposure on the Blakely Island restoration example shown in the power point?
  - Response: The Blakely Island example is exposed to Rosario Strait with very high wind exposure and waves.
- Question/Comment: There may be an option to do native plant salvage and reuse with this project prior to construction, is that something you would consider?
  - Response: Yes!
- Question: What percentage of funding do you need before you start the project?
  - Response: We start the project only once we have 100% of the funding secured. We currently have funding for the design and permitting, but do not have any funds secured for construction.
- Question/Comment: Permitting timeline seems to assume that you will have some level of designs. How do you plan to keep to the project timeline while including public input into the designs? We want to make sure we have opportunities for input when you get more specifics ready.
  - We have concerns that must be specifically addressed in the final feasibility.
  - The service road to Whidbey Telecom property has eroded dramatically and people drive on the toe of the hill. If toe erosion continues, we are concerned about the stability of the road.
  - Response: The feasibility and design process will begin shortly, and we anticipate having a draft ready by the end of the year. We will hold another meeting in early January or as soon as we have this ready to share.

The design process will include further investigations about erosion potential and the road. The project will be designed so that there will not be an impact to adjacent properties.
- Question: Is the Johannessen Feeder Bluff survey report available? 2005 or 2006 survey along E Whidbey.
  - Response: Report can be found in Additional Information section here:  
<http://hws.ekosystem.us/project/200/2396>
  - There is a newer feeder bluff report for Puget Sound available here:  
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/parts/1406016part1.pdf>
- Concerns: Removal of parking used by visitors to beach
  - Response: Our goal is to not remove parking, but we will assess if it is feasible to shorten the parking area (moving landward) to improve the restoration and vegetation buffer but maintain the parking spaces.
- Concerns: Access for hand launching non-motorized boats currently using the north end of the project site and “access” road to Whidbey telecom cable. My desire is to maintain parking and hand launch facilities for kayaks.
  - Response: One design element we will look at is including one to two paths from the parking lot to the beach that allows for hand launching non-motorized boats, rather than having people launch from the Whidbey Telecom access road. It would be a much more convenient location to launch from.
- Comment: Add to project goals- Protect existing and adjacent public and private capital improvements



- Response: The project will be designed so that there will not be an impact to adjacent properties and road access.

**Other concerns provided on note cards at the meeting:**

1. Removal of parking used by visitors to the beach (ok to move but not reduce).
2. Access for hand launch of non-motorized boats currently using the north end of the project site and “access” road to Whidbey Telecom cable.
3. Desire is to maintain parking and hand launch facility for kayaks.

*Response: All of these concerns will be considered and addressed in the design process. Hand launching for kayaks is a desirable use of the site.*

**Additional questions, comments, or concerns received through email or phone:**

1. **Hidden Beach Homes:** The first house south of the proposed project on Hidden Beach will be approximately 8 feet from Puget Sound and will be susceptible to storm damage if the concrete-filled sandbags are removed. The concrete-filled sandbags are on DNR property so cannot be maintained by that homeowner. This house must be protected now, during and after the Project. No specific remediation/protections were mentioned at the informational meeting.

*Response: Specifics regarding design were not mentioned because we have not proceeded with that phase yet. The project will be designed so that there will not be an impact to the adjacent house.*

2. **Road Erosion:** A significant amount of erosion has occurred on and adjacent to the dirt road leading to the Whidbey Telecom property. Vehicles are now driving on the toe of the hill. We request this erosion and the impact of vehicles driving on the toe of the hill be assessed by the Island County Public Works Department to ensure the sole County road access leading to Hidden Beach is not damaged, and always remains passable.

*Response: We are in communication with Island County Public Works and Whidbey Telecom. This area was identified in the initial assessment report as having potential erosion risk. It will be investigated in the design phase.*

*Options may be considered for removing access for vehicles to the dirt road to reduce this pressure.*

3. **Whidbey Telecom Access:** We stand in support of Whidbey Telecom’s need to have access to their Beachcombers property. Currently, the sole access to their property is the dirt road described in 2 above. If feasible, the dirt road access should be physically closed/gated to all except for Whidbey Telecom authorized vehicles.

*Response: Options may be considered for removing access for vehicles to the dirt road to reduce this pressure.*

4. **Hidden Beach Forage Fish:** Information was presented that forage fish habitats were studied to the north and south of Hidden Beach, but not at Hidden Beach. We request a comparable study be conducted at Hidden Beach in order to understand the current situation.

*Response:*

*We will work with volunteers to begin surveys. We also encourage community members to participate in this effort. Please contact me if you wish to do so.*

5. **Project Need Justification:** Slides presented at the informational meeting reflected the theoretical need for the Project. When asked if the potential problems represent the actual conditions found at Hidden Beach, it was stated they did not. We request the actual conditions present at Hidden Beach be evaluated and that information be provided to us prior to any further evaluation of the Hidden Beach site for the reasons included below. Merritt Clifton verbally presented data at the informational meeting that indicates the conditions currently found at Hidden Beach are already consistent with the results the Project ultimately hopes to achieve after restoration efforts. We request Mr. Clifton's information be documented and reconciled with the findings ultimately included in the final Project feasibility study.

*Response: All restoration projects begin with theoretical concepts and become site specific through the planning and design process. The site has been evaluated for current conditions as indicated in the assessment report. We welcome additional information that exists regarding use of the site by other species. This project seeks to improve habitat specific to forage fish spawning for the benefit of salmonids, marine birds, and orcas.*

*Jim Johannessen of Coastal Geologic Services (CGS) is a highly respected and sought-after consultant in the area of coastal processes and shoreline armor removal. He and his firm have documented conditions throughout Puget Sound with extensive studies of Island County. We feel confident that his analysis will be fair and accurate.*

6. **Project Alternatives Analysis:** One of the hallmarks of a quality feasibility analysis is the consideration of alternative plans by the Project Sponsors. For each option there should be measurable objectives of the Project to clarify expected outcome. We request this analysis be applied to all components of the Hidden Beach Project site, including the geological, marine habitat and public use of Hidden Beach.

*Response: We will work with Coastal Geologic Services (CGS) to determine if a range of alternatives are required based on the desired outcome for the restoration. Options will likely be included for locations of public access points to the beach and types and placement of vegetation, but items such as removal of the pilings will likely not require alternatives. Whether materials are left in place, moved, or reinforced to provide erosion protection at locations that may be at future risk will be determined based on the studies to be conducted by CGS.*

7. **Project Feasibility Study:** As we read the Project feasibility study prepared by Coastal Geological Services, we found some assertions that do not match our data/understanding OR the info was presented differently in the presentation slides/discussion. Once the presentation materials are posted we will update this issue with more specifics.

8. **"Restoration" Permit Start Date:** The Project timeline indicated a goal of beginning the Project permitting in March 2019. We request the final Project feasibility be made available no later than January 15, 2019, to allow us to review and comment on the final feasibility of the Project, and to allow our comments to be incorporated into the Project permit application, if appropriate. Once the Project permit is submitted, any change to the Project will be difficult. In the event the Project permit is applied for, we would hope to support, rather than contest, the issuance of the permit.

*Response: The timeline we presented is our ideal timeline. This may change as the project proceeds, but we will try to meet this as best as we can. As indicated in the presentation, plans exist for future comment periods and public presentations.*

9. **Project Milestone Review:** Some of our members believe the Project is further along than previously represented. They were surprised to learn of the aggressive Project timeline, which tends to support that belief. There appears to be no public input opportunity into the Project after the final feasibility is determined, and the permitting process period is unusually short. We request the Project Sponsors provide a complete timeline of all anticipated steps and dates and explain how the permitting process can be accomplished in the timeframe presented in the Project timeline.

*Response: The project is no further along than what we have presented. The permitting process we have outlined is just the timing for us to submit permit applications. It can take up to a year to receive permits from the various permitting agencies. This is a fairly typical timeline for projects of this nature.*

*Here is a list of potential permits and applications that are needed. Many are applied for using the same application referred to as a JARPA (Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application).*

	PERMIT/PROCESS	AGENCY
✓	SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) – identifies environmental impacts of the project.	Shoreline jurisdiction (Island County)
?	NEPA	Federal agency depending on funding-Unless we have federal funding, NEPA will not be done.
✓	Shoreline Substantial Development Permit Exemption	Shoreline jurisdiction (Island County)
✓	Clearing & Grading – if needed	Island County
✓	Nationwide Permit 27 – for work in tidal waters below MHHW	US Army Corps of Engineers
✓	ESA Compliance/Concurrence	NMFS/NOAA/USFWS
✓	Hydraulic Permit Approval	WDFW
✓	Section 401 Water Quality	Dept of Ecology
?	CZM Certification	Dept of Ecology
?	NPDES Construction Stormwater General Permit	Dept of Ecology

✓	EO 05-05 Cultural & Historical Review	DAHP/DNR
✓	Section 106 Cultural & Historical Review	Federal lead
✓	Biological assessment for FEMA/ESA	County/USACE

10. **Biological Assessment:** We believe compliance with the National and State Environmental Policy Acts may require an Environmental Impact Statement including but not limited to a biological assessment of the Project site. There has currently been no biological study and, in any event, would be important and material for a satisfactory assessment of the Project. To date, the study of the Project site has included only a high-level geologist's report. The Project will also have a significant biological impact. We request a biological study of the Project site be conducted, including a cost/benefit analysis that concludes the net benefit for any one species will be positive. The biological study should include the impact of the restoration on the other regular users of the habitat to be transformed, including bird species, and gray whales that feed at Hidden Beach during migration.

*Response: As noted above, NEPA only comes into play if we have federal funding or the project were to occur on federal land. In this case, we do not have federal funding for construction (or any funding at this time), so we will follow the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). A biological assessment (BA) will be completed for the project, but this cannot be done until we have a basic design to work from. The BA will identify impacts to listed endangered and threatened species. It is unlikely that an Environmental Impact Study will be required unless it is determined that the project will have "significant adverse environmental impacts".*

11. **Public Access Assessment:** Currently, people from Whidbey Island and elsewhere enjoy using Hidden Beach as a waterfront access point. While the Project is being presented as a marine habitat restoration project, very little has been discussed or presented about the public use of Hidden Beach. We request the physical impact of marine habitat restoration at Hidden Beach be reconciled with the anticipated public use of Hidden Beach, including, but not limited to, the potential for increased vehicle traffic, people walking, dragging/launching watercraft on the restored site, people crabbing and harvesting shellfish on Hidden Beach, any continued erosion of the beach which will reduce the size of the public use areas, the amount of parking available if the current parking area is reduced in size by erosion, and the feasibility of public parking on the existing County road should the current parking be found to be inadequate after the Project is completed. While the public beach access on Hidden Beach is desirable and has increased significantly over the past few years, the impact of that access on the marine habitat restoration must be evaluated. Several transit walkways through the restoration area will likely not be used as anticipated, based on current unregulated site usage found near the parking lot and at the northern edge of the Project. If public recreational use of Hidden Beach continues as a permitted use, we request the Project site be properly designed to accommodate that use, and the Project site be appropriately signed and managed by the county and/or state. There are now no bathroom facilities, trash receptacles, trash pickup, park ranger or Sheriff patrols. The

conditions at this gateway to our homes must not be allowed to deteriorate as it has in the past few years. We are currently negatively impacted by these issues and request the site not be used for public access unless these issues are fully mitigated. We have observed activities that are not appropriate and not allowed on Hidden Beach including overnight camping, outdoor fires during burn bans, drug use with needles thrown on the ground (we pick those needles up), trash on the Project site (there are no trash receptacles), and people and pets defecating on the ground.

*Response: As you noted, the site is currently used in desirable and undesirable manners by the public and is intended as a public access site by Island County and WA Department of Natural Resources. Design considerations will include creation of a riparian vegetation zone that will effectively limit where users can access the beach. Additionally, there will likely be an option for reducing the current dirt road to become a trail for foot traffic only. This area could be gated off, which while it won't preclude users from walking to the beach, would limit impacts from vehicles.*

- 1. The County does not have a mechanism in place to predict "anticipated use" of a public access beach.*
- 2. Harvesting of shellfish and crabbing is controlled by WDFW and not the County.*
- 3. Parks has adopted the State Parks policy on trash.... "Pack it, in Pack it out". We do not intend on placing trash cans on site, nor a restroom unless conditions change, that is, there is a need based on a public health issue.*
- 4. We will place signage that depicts private and public boundaries and prohibited activities.*
- 5. We have many parks that have limited parking and parking is not prohibited on the shoulders of Island county roads.*
- 6. Parks is regulated by Island County Code, and the Code is enforced by the Sheriff's office. If there is a violation in process, one needs to dial 911.*

**9.40.440 - Enforcement methods/civil infractions/criminal violations.** *The primary method of enforcing these park rules and regulations shall be through requesting **voluntary compliance** of park users or by the use of administrative sanctions by department personnel. Enforcement through the issuance of notice of civil infraction and misdemeanor citation or complaint of violations or park ordinances shall be executed solely by law enforcement personnel and/or the prosecuting attorney.*