

Sophia Cassam

From: Jeffrey Bossler <jeffbossler@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 15, 2021 7:55 AM
To: Erin Halcomb
Cc: Sophia Cassam
Subject: Re: SJC Proposed Tree Code: Public Comment

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PS: Unless I was reading too fast, I don't think I saw anything in the PDF relating to deer protection for said planted trees. It's been my observation everywhere on Orcas that it takes at least 15 years for a newly planted tree to be "deer proof", enabling the cage or trunk protection to be removed, and if not protected, the tree will surely be destroyed. When a buck thrashes a tree, it is permanently injured and its lifespan drastically shortened. Even if the tree forms bark across the scar on its trunk, the process of rot and decay has already begun and will continue, critically weakening the tree.

There are other issues the County is not addressing adequately when the subject turns to waterfront screening trees, especially on shallow soils, regarding long-term viability, deer and climate challenges, and unrealistic expectations given current practices.

Jeff

alpineseaside.com



On Tue, Jun 15, 2021 at 6:08 AM Jeffrey Bossler <jeffbossler@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Erin: / Dear Sophia:

Thanks for this! I finally made the time to read this, and it all looks pretty good to me. The one thing I really don't like is the chain link fence idea on construction sites. I've seen far too many construction fences and barriers remain on finished sites for years. I've worked in conjunction with many excavators who have all been as good as they are able to be regarding staying out of sensitive areas and keeping their foot print to a minimum.

While these codes of conduct are great in their intent, I am certain they will receive some pushback from individuals who have no sense of collective responsibility for our collective good.

In light of the die off happening with the deer, I also believe it is high time that a real discussion followed by real action on our longstanding deer problem if we are fully serious about preserving our ecosystem. The die off will only be a short respite for the empty shell of what was once an abundantly diverse ecosystem.

Natural recruitment of trees is nearly down to zero due to overbrowsing, and I've seen what I believe are island-wide extinctions of most of the traditionally historic spring wildflowers which gave the bees a jump start to good hive health. Short-lived flowering shrubs from Salmonberry to Elderberry are disappearing. Our canopy is thinning as trees die and are not being replaced, and what is left on the forest floor is being browsed to the ground. *No code of forest conduct will succeed without a routine check on the deer population.*

Pasted below is just one photo that represents the destruction of our ecosystem by an out of control deer population.



I've worked on this site for at least 15 years, and the environmental degradation has been impressive. Void of any excavators, tree cutting, or development, the once chest-high Salal has been whittled down to mostly dead sticks. The forest canopy is thinning due to trees that have been made weak by a buck's thrashing wound in the tree's infancy, and all tree seedlings are so heavily browsed and thrashed, there is no realistic hope of them ever becoming trees. I've watched every fern on these 80 acres be browsed to death and now the soil is bare and open to the sky with massive amounts of Tansy and field grass filling in.

I've worked with plants and forests full-time for the past 50 of my 66 years on this planet ... 33 of those years on Orcas, and I am certain that an unchecked deer population poses a much larger long-term threat to the San Juan Islands than does development and climate change combined. The only approach that works is to reduce their numbers back to a level consistent with a sustainable carrying capacity.

Thank you for the work you are doing! We need a lot of conservation effort everywhere and a lot of education and bodies to get the work done. I'd love to see more young people involved in both the concept of maintaining our collective assets inherent in our ecosystem as well as the healthy physical activities it takes to manage our forests.

Have a great day!
Jeff

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On Tue, Jun 8, 2021 at 5:01 PM Erin Halcomb <erinh@sjclandbank.org> wrote:

Greetings,

Attached is a draft code to preserve trees and canopy cover in the County. Its overarching goal is to preserve the ecological function and benefits of trees in our community. It has three main mechanisms:

- 1) to prevent removal of large diameter trees, unless they are dangerous or meet other exemptions;
- 2) to include trees in building permit applications, along with a tree protection plan for any retained trees; and
- 3) to replace removed trees with new plantings to maintain a similar number of trees on individual properties.

The proposed code in full is attached. It allows for vegetation management on public lands and on properties where there is an established forest management plan. Much of this code is already in effect in many counties and cities in the Puget Sound who are improving their climate resiliency, stormwater management, and quality of life. Please note this is a separate effort from any forest land-use reforms (which do not apply to many smaller private parcels with trees). And, lastly, if it is adopted by the County Council, SJC planners would need to review/rewrite components.

If this effort interests you, please consider sending a letter of support for this initiative to:

Sophia Cassam at sophiac@sanjuanco.com by **June 14, 2021**.

Feel free to pass this on to your neighbors who care about trees, and to reach out to either Miles Becker (cc'd) or me if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Erin