## Sophia Cassam

**From:** Jan Alderton <janetmalderton@gmail.com>
**Sent:** Thursday, September 9, 2021 7:17 PM
**To:** Sophia Cassam
**Subject:** Tree Conservation Docket Request 21-0005
**Attachments:** Tree Conservation docket JA.docx; Wanton Wetland Destruction.pdf

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Dear Sophia,
Please share my following comments with the county councilors.
Thank-you!
Janet Alderton
Orcas Island

Request 21-0005—Tree conservation code provisions

This request seeks to: (1) to consolidate all Code provisions regarding trees in one location; and (2) add general tree retention and protection standards to the Code.

The new tree standards would: (a) protect trees from unintentional destruction during construction; (b) maintain tree canopy; (c) establish general tree retention standards; and (d) protect significant and exceptional trees and groves.

Staff recommends against consolidating all tree protections into one code location and did not provide a recommendation on whether to take up the new tree standard proposal. To avoid confusion, I agree with staff that the tree protection standards in the Shoreline Master Program and Critical Areas Ordinance should not be consolidated into a single section.

The allowance of Timber Harvest in the Shoreline Master Program for San Juan County makes no ecological sense and is contributing to the on-going decline of salmon and the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales (orcas). Allowing timber harvest along our shorelines has certainly led to confusion among some property owners who think this means they can remove as many trees as they might wish. The tree provisions in the shoreline zone are written in a confusing manner. Although I have long been interested in ecology and forests, the shoreline tree "protections" baffle me. The dot-matrix method of estimating tree canopy seems difficult to use when standing on terra firma. Maybe one needs a drone equipped with a wide-angle camera.

I think that the general complexity and confusing language used in the San Juan County regulations prevents ordinary people from even trying to understand and "do the right things". More often, people just do as they wish. And our staff in the Department of Community Development is too overwhelmed to do much to change this dynamic.

Yes, I do support San Juan County enacting tree standards similar to those provided by Mr. Becker because our county code does not provide general tree protection language. I walked my five shoreline acres today with an eye for comparing some of Mr Becker's suggested tree metrics to what exists on this dry, rocky shoreline in Deer Harbor on Orcas Island. The tree diameters on my parcel are definitely on the lower end of the ranges listed in the tables. Some impressive stumps exist on my land that show Douglas firs once had trunks approaching three feet in diameter. Currently, the largest Doug Fir has a two-foot diameter truck at breast height. So I would recommend that local San Juan County forest ecologists create the "tree points" tables that might take local rainfall variations into account. The east side of Orcas has around 50% more rain than dry Deer Harbor. Our Climate is warming and rainfall patterns are changing.

Then there is wildfire risk…
I would find it so valuable to have people with forestry/wildfire mitigation expertise in our San Juan County Conservation District Department. Funding would likely need to come from an additional levy/tax, but the resulting savings in disaster mitigation would be tremendous.

I know that Friends of the San Juans regularly fields calls from community members who are concerned about non-forestry clear-cutting of lots and who then become distressed to learn that much of the extensive tree cover we enjoy in the islands is not protected and has been retained more by accident than intent. As president of the board of directors, people call me in distress (see the attached Polaris image "Wanton Wetland Destruction"). There is really nothing to be done without new protections that are meaningfully enforced. Maybe contractors who illegally cut down trees could be fined along with the property owner.

Our island trees provide many benefits beyond beautiful landscapes and rural character – from essential habitat to carbon sequestration to erosion control and aquifer recharge and more!

I strongly support the adoption of general tree standards. The sample language from Mr. Becker provides an excellent starting point.

This map is derived from San Juan County's Geographic Information System (GIS). It is intended for reference only and is not guaranteed to survey accuracy. The information represented on this map is subject to change without notice

1 in = 170 feet

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# Wanton Wetland destruction

Polaris

Date: 6/9/2021

Time: 2:54:33 PM