

18 June 2024

San Juan County Department of Community Development  
Attn. Brooke K. Sullivan  
135 Rhone Street  
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

RE: 2024 Annual Docket: Staff Report and Public Hearing

Dear Planners, Planning Commission, and County Council,

With regards to Docket items:

B.6 Request 24-0006: Friends of the San Juan Islands

B.7 Request 24-0007: Orcas Power and Light Cooperative

B.8 Request 24-0008: Orcas Power and Light Cooperative

In your review of the aforementioned Docket items, I want to remind the Community Development Department (DCD), Planning Commission, and County Council of the remarkable citizen-driven extensively detailed 1991 Open Space and Conservation Plan (OSCP) which developed a rating system for visually significant landscape units throughout the islands. With a matching grant from the San Juan Preservation Trust, San Juan County initiated this open space and conservation planning process in 1990 with the goal "*...to develop a plan to identify and protect those open spaces, vistas, and view corridors that substantially contribute to the sense of "ruralness" that now prevails in most of the County.*" The OSCP was later incorporated into the 1998 Comprehensive Plan developed under the auspices of the Growth Management Act. In all subsequent Comprehensive Plan updates, revisions, and amendments, the Vision, Goals and Policies to conserve open space and scenic vistas remain integral to the Comprehensive Plan. In accordance with Goal 2.2.I: **To protect and conserve open space and scenic resources**, the OSCP is the guiding document for the protection of significant open space resources in the islands including the San Juan Valley Heritage Plan Overlay District that was adopted in 2002 to "*...recognize and protect visual open space resources as equal in importance to maintaining traditional agricultural uses in this location*". These plans, policies and regulations for protecting open space and view corridors in the islands cannot simply be ignored now because of the urgency for renewable energy generation facilities.

Should you choose to add these Docket items to the DCD work plan, I urge you to revisit the OSCP - specifically the sections that identify the most highly ranked landscape units on each major island and consider these areas, regardless of their land use designation, as not appropriate locations for commercial power generation facilities or utility renewable power-generation facilities. Such uses like vast solar arrays and industrial-type battery storage containers blanketing and blocking island view corridors were never envisioned in areas rated highly for open space and scenic resources as they would significantly alter farm, forest and rural landscape values by increasing the built, human environment in relatively undeveloped areas. Protecting these values is even more important today given development pressures in the islands.

Please don't ignore the tireless work of engaged citizens to protect what is special about the islands.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns!

  
Darcie Nielsen  
San Juan Island