

Sophia Cassam

From: Jan Alderton <janetmalderton@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 9, 2021 5:38 PM
To: Sophia Cassam
Subject: Flood Zone Docket Request Comments
Attachments: Flood Zone Docket JA.docx

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Dear Sophia,

Please share my comments on the requested Comprehensive Plan Amendment, Request 21-0004—Floodplain development proposal, with Councilors Wolf, Minnie, and Stephens.

Thank-you,
Janet Alderton
Orcas Island

This request seeks a Code revision so that agricultural and accessory structures could be built in Special Flood Hazard Areas without a variance if they were constructed of flood damage resistant materials and/or built to allow water to flow through them. Currently, such structures must be elevated to avoid flooding impacts unless an applicant obtains a variance to construct them in flood zones. Staff recommend against this revision in large part because the option is available with a variance. I support the staff recommendation and believe that the variance process will allow such construction “where appropriate” while protecting important flood zones from impacts of that development.

I have been pondering the “where appropriate” and cannot think of an example.

When I last looked at the FEMA Flood Maps for San Juan County several years ago, the inundation areas were all along our shorelines. I just checked them out again:

<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search?AddressQuery=Friday%20Harbor%2C%20WA#searchresultsanchor>

They still are along our shorelines between the low and high tidal elevations.

Therefore, I am confused about what type of agriculture would be occurring in these “flood prone” areas.

Would it be shellfish "farming"? Most (all crops?) do not grow well under salty conditions. Maybe someone is thinking about kelp farming? As far as I know, kelp farming does not require overwater structures.

If we are thinking about terrestrial flood zones, would these be wetlands? I thought building was forbidden in wetlands.