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Jefferson County Begins Update on Shoreline Master Program

Port Townsend, WA—One of the treasures of Jefferson County is its shoreline. With protection and restoration in mind, Jefferson County's Department of Community Development (DCD) is working closely with the state's Department of Ecology on a project called the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) Update.

"The Washington State Legislature passed the Shoreline Management Act in 1971," said Josh Peters, DCD Senior Long Range Planner and SMP project manager. "A statewide program was launched with three broad policies: encourage water-dependent uses, protect shoreline natural resources and promote public access."

The current Jefferson County SMP, which is the local plan by which the County and the State Department of Ecology jointly administer the Shoreline Management Act, dates to 1989. Shoreline management policies impact Jefferson County residents by protecting the shoreline environment and promoting public access where possible. The public enjoys the benefits of the shoreline with activities like fishing, clamming, boating and beach walking. The Act also protects the shoreline for commercial uses such as marine trades and aquaculture that are economic drivers in the County.

Coastal science and knowledge has changed greatly over the past 16 years. The SMP Update will revise Jefferson County policies and regulations to meet new State requirements that were established in 2003. The SMP affects land use and development proposals for all marine waters as well as the larger streams, rivers and lakes in the county.

Jefferson County is scheduled to submit an update of its Shoreline Master Program (SMP) to the Department of Ecology by June 30, 2007.

In 2006, DCD will coordinate preliminary work with Adolfsen Associates, Inc., the consultant selected to assist the County with the SMP update; the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, operated by Battelle Science and Technology International; shoreline advisory committees; and other entities and individuals.

There will be opportunities for public input with open houses and public forums over the next 18 months of the project. A Shoreline Charette is planned for October 12-17, 2006,

with more details to come closer to the event. In 2007, the preliminary proposal will go through the formal public process associated with the formulation of a Planning Commission recommendation and a legislative decision by the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC).

The SMP affects shoreline landowners because it's the regulatory entity that specifies things like building setbacks from the shore, bulkheads and the building of docks and stairs, as well as determining allowed and conditional land uses in shoreline jurisdiction.

For more information about the Shoreline Management Act and SMPs, visit the Department of Ecology's Web site at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/sma/index.html. Also, for more information about Jefferson County's work on the SMP, go to www.co.jefferson.wa.us/commdevelopment/ShorelinePlanning.htm or contact Michelle McConnell, the County's SMP Project Coordinator, at (360) 379-4484 or via e-mail at mmconnell@co.jefferson.wa.us.

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