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Dept. Comm. Devel.

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Re: WDFW's Kitsap Habitat Assessment

Vivian:

This week Department of Fish & Wildlife analysts came to Port Orchard to brief county staff and me on this study. They were respectively Mary Linders and Erik Neatherlin; Jim Bolger and Paul Nelson.

It was a good session. In brief, most of the concerns expressed in my 26 December letter to you have either been recognized already and overcome, remain to be dealt with by whomever uses the WDFW product, or are invalid. What follows is particulars about these themes. But first, I was impressed by the competence and professionalism of Linders and Neatherlin. They're a credit to their Department.

What it's about--The project's intent is, first, to provide vegetation maps (a forester would say type maps) in considerable detail, across the county, augmented with already-mapped or already-identified features like salt marshes, mudflats, and cliffs. There are 5 vegetation categories, ranging from mature forest through 3 other forest categories to grass/forb/bare. There are land-use classes and classes relating to kinds of stream channels, kinds of marshes, and so on. Perhaps 20 classes are distinguished.

This information comes primarily from LIDAR imagery, which can readily distinguish the density of the forest and its height. As you know, LIDAR can deliver 12-inch resolution but these images are averaged so that actual resolution is about 82 feet.

This means that the map has, in effect, a grid of 82-foot squares, within which a computer averaged the veg density and height and placed the square into one of the 5 cover classes. Each class-colored 'pixel' appears on the map as a tiny square with its own color.

If a single forest tract covers, say, five acres it produces some 32 of these little colored squares that appear on the map as a single polygon. This process has generated a large number of variously colored polygons on the Kitsap Peninsula map; quite impressive. Some LandSat images are also used to identify grass/forb/bare lands, and this too is not close resolution, as mentioned in my letter.

As always in such maps, small wetlands are not always spotted.