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KITSAP COUNTY DEPT OF
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

16 November 2003

Jim Bolger
Natural Resources Program
Kitsap County Courthouse
614 Division
Port Orchard, WA 98366

Re: Geologic Hazard Areas

Dear Jim:

My geology major happened long ago and I'll miss the latter part of your 19 November meeting. So I'll comment here about geologic hazard areas.

The King County treatment (their BAS Chapter 5) looks good though it's virtually vacant of numbers and its lit cites are ancient and seem to lack references to some good things done recently by DOE, DNR and others, pertaining specifically to Puget Sound.

King County refers (page 5-13) to a (California) tree that transpired over 100 gallons in a day. That doesn't happen in winter when we want to get rid of stormwater. Trees, shrubs and grass go so quiescent here that evapotranspiration declines as much as 99 percent. Too, (irrigated) grass typically does better than forests, because of the former's higher primary productivity.

I knew Walt Megahan, mentioned on p. 5-13 relative to vegetation and slope stability. His Idaho Batholith work involved highly erosive, logging-ravaged soils immensely susceptible to surface erosion, vastly different from our compressed tills and high water tables. I don't think he ever met a tree perched on a saturated soil above hardpan, all at the edge of a bluff.

In fact I believe that doctrine and dogma of resource conservation around Puget Sound have regularly ignored two key factors: our tight soils and our climatic propensity for vegetation; we can't keep the stuff from growing. Which relates to erosion hazards. We haven't found any on the inland Island, aside from construction sites.

The King County coverage of rill erosion is certainly apt, but our time for that was long ago. Indeed the erosion concern may be beating a dead horse. I suspect there were three periods in Bainbridge history when erosion was prevalent. One was the 1870s and 80s, when logging and burning reached almost everywhere. Another was the era of stump ranching when everybody had livestock and overgrazed pastures were the norm. The third was the time of strawberry farms when much of the island was kept clear for berry culture, with long rows of bare soil exposed to winter rains. With the berry farms invaded by woods, Steve Morse, the Island's staff forester, has estimated that half the island is now wooded. Except for the extensive berry farming, Kitsap's history seems similar. In any case, the most effective