

Whatcom County Candidates

Editor's Note: Ten races for the Port of Bellingham Commission, Whatcom County Council and Bellingham City Council will appear on the general election ballot. Three County Council races will appear on the primary ballot.

Candidate responses were not edited by *Whatcom Watch*.

Background:

Lake Whatcom is the drinking water source for Bellingham and surrounding areas, such as Sudden Valley. Many activities – from logging and development, to pesticides and invasive mussels hitching rides on uninspected boats – threaten the quality of our drinking water source. By the year 2066, the city and county are required to prevent 3,150 pounds of phosphorus from entering Lake Whatcom annually from the surrounding landscape, as mandated by the EPA.

The way in which the city and county must do that is to have over 80 percent of the watershed mimic a natural forested condition. The majority of the land base, as well as much of the remaining developable areas in the watershed, is in Whatcom County's jurisdiction. Whatcom County will be exploring an update to their development regulations in the watershed (known as the Lake Whatcom Overlay District) that includes preserving mature trees and discouraging large lawns for new residential developments. The purpose is to standardize its development codes with the city of Bellingham's and require elements of the existing Homeowner Incentive Program to apply to new developments.

Question:

Do you support regulations in the Whatcom Overlay District to limit the size of lawns for all new developments, cap limits on the number of native trees that can be removed from a property (up to 35 percent or 5,000 square feet, whichever is lesser), and require the replacement of native trees when removing 50-plus-year-old trees? Please answer yes or no and explain.

Whatcom County Council — At-Large

Kamal Bhachu

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Kamal Bhachu acknowledged receipt of the question. A reminder email was sent three days before the deadline and a phone call the day after the deadline. *Whatcom Watch* didn't receive an answer to the question.



Barry Buchanan

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Yes, I support regulations that limit lawn sizes and work to increase native tree canopies. I also supported the Lake Whatcom Utility District the council enacted to increase the revenue stream to protect Lake Whatcom. I also supported the Homeowners Improvement Program (HIP) that provides financial incentives to make improvements to properties to reduce phosphorus and other pollutant runoff.



Bob Burr

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Yes. I would support such regulations; but, I don't feel they are sufficient. One of the problems I see with the Lake Whatcom watershed is that County Staff is too hasty to quietly issue Determinations of Non-Significance when there is obvious significance and an EIS should have been required. I would support an ordinance requiring County Council review prior to issuing a DNS for construction on all watershed property and for larger projects throughout the county.

I would also support the banning of non-electric motorized boats in Whatcom County waters except for those with properties on the lake or with moorages such as in Sudden Valley. This grandfathering would not apply to purchasers of such properties. Lake Whatcom is our reservoir. No other place that I have lived has had a reservoir that allowed recreational boating.

I am running to alert voters to the need to act urgently and massively at all levels of government to avert or delay mass extinction. A big part of the climate catastrophe is the gradual disappearance of potable water. There needs to be greater urgency in protecting Lake Whatcom. In a few decades, larger portions of the county will need to access it.



Misty Flowers

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Yes, I support regulations that protect Whatcom Lake for multiple reasons including because Bellingham relies on it for drinking water. I agree that native vegetation is essential for a healthy ecosystem and should be protected. I also know that there are long-term consequences of using pesticides near water sources and hope to see Known Carcinogen Pesticides such as Glyphosate banned in Whatcom County for the health of our community and future generations.

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