

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 — District 3



Tyler Byrd

(360) 592-3620 tyler@votetylerbyrd.com

As someone that lives in the Lake Whatcom Watershed, I would be open to placing reasonable restrictions on the size of lawns and the removal of trees. Before doing so, I would need to engage the community and better educate myself on any potential negative impacts. We must pass along a healthy and sustainable environment to future generations. Our goal should be to do so without destroying someone's land value by making it impossible to develop.

As an example, many parcels in Sudden Valley are less than 5,500 sq. ft. in size. Consider the average house of 1,900 sq. ft. has an additional 480 sq. ft. garage, 200 sq. ft. deck, and driveway. Then a total of 2,700 sq. ft. is needed. A 35% restriction would limit the owner to using 1,925 sq. ft., making it impossible to build an average-size home.

I don't believe our intent to take away someone's dream of building their own home or make our current housing crisis worse. There are ways we can protect our environment while also protecting landowners. It will just need us working together with open minds, ears, and respect to do so.



Rebecca Lewis

(360) 510-5727 friendsofrebeccalewis@gmail.com

Yes, I do agree with the regulations. It is paramount for our environment and residents to protect the watershed. According to RE Sources, "A cleanup plan for Lake Whatcom was issued by the EPA and Washington Department of Ecology in 2016. To date, 436 pounds of phosphorus have been prevented — at a significant cost to taxpayers." In 2018 alone, \$9.5 million was spent in taxpayer money on protecting the watershed. The more development, logging, and buildings that take place on the lake have the possibility of costing taxpayers millions to try and fix the problems these activities cause.

Once phosphorus is present in the watershed, it can cause destructive algae blooms. Treating water for these blooms can be extremely expensive. In 2019, Bellingham spent 14 million dollars on a pre-treatment facility. According to RE Sources, "each pound of phosphorus removed is costing us over \$35,000." If we do the math, it will cost our community more than \$110 million to "clean up" the lake in order to reach 3,150 pounds of phosphorus reduction annually.

We have a responsibility to our environment and our taxpayers to keep Lake Whatcom safe and clean using responsible methods outlined by Whatcom Overlay District.



Fred Rinard

(360) 966-5185 fredrinard@peoplepc.com

I'm in agreement to miminal level of restrictions coming to new developments at Lake Whatcom. That these regulations are certified, cost effective and conclusive to meeting the mandate the E.P.A. has given us. That by 2066 wants 3,150 lbs of phosphorus kept from entering the lake annually. Phosphorus is killing the oxygen in the lake water taking plants and animal life with it. In 1998 Lake Whatcom went above the phosphorus rating allowed by Wa. Dept. of ecology and still more regulations are needed.

The Bellingham Herald June 13, 2021 reported that 'toxic algae' found in Wiser Lake a microcystin produced by algae can cause liver damage in people if swallowed. The level was 20 times the maximum considered safe. Let's not let this happen to Lake Whatcom.

Tree removal depends on slope and drainage area to the lake. Drainage gets plugged from debris backing up volume of water from heavy rains, flash flooding to the lake. Trees are Lake Whatcom natural beauty keeping the hillsides and shoreline stable also home to all types of wild life. With this considered selected tree cutting and re-planting could work. "cut one tree replace two".



Kathy Sabel

(360) 778-1553 kathymossy@comcast.net

No, I don't support more regulations in the County to sync with the City of Bellingham regulations. The County and City are different. If people are given an informed choice, they will choose to have a great community for the environment and people, meaning more regulations are not needed. People can and do make changes voluntarily, you just need to inform them of the needed change, and possibly fund it. Reduction of lawns and preservation of native trees can be accomplished without more regulations.

Water is a critical issue for Whatcom County with a Water Rights Adjudication scheduled to begin after June 1, 2023, when all water rights holders will be summoned to Court to defend their right. The Court will make the final determination. The County budget has \$250,000 in the next two years to coordinate with some groups a collaborative, legally-binding agreement that would be part of the Adjudication.

Not just quality of water, but quantity of water in Whatcom County requires the involvement of all not some, and political leadership.