



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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June 15, 2016

Mr. Mike Lithgow  
Planning Director  
Post Office Box 5066  
Newport, Washington 99156-5066

RE: Proposed amendments to the Pend Oreille County Future Land-Use Map to rezone 167 acres from NR-20 to R-5

Dear Mr. Lithgow:

Thank you for sending Growth Management Services the proposed amendments to Pend Oreille County's Comprehensive Plan. We received the materials you submitted on April 21, 2016 and processed the submittal with Material ID No. 22313.

After reviewing the proposed rezone of designated resource lands, we have concerns about the following that we encourage you, the Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners to consider.

- The proposal, as detailed in the applicant's SEPA Environmental Checklist, appears to rely on the provision of urban services to unincorporated, non-urban areas. Exhibit A of the application states "So, in fact, Urban Services do exist within the bounds of this request and can be expanded to serve this proposal." The Growth Management Act (GMA) is clear that urban governmental services should not be extended or expanded in rural areas except in limited circumstances necessary to protect basic public health, safety, and the environment.<sup>1</sup> Rezoning large parcels designated as natural resource lands to create smaller lots and denser development would not meet those criteria.

Exhibit A of the application also indicates that portions of the subject property should not have been designated as Natural Resource Lands because of the proximity to urban services, including those serving the Aspen Reflections Landing development. We disagree with this interpretation. It was logical to conclude that intensive, historical development patterns would not extend beyond the existing limited area, because this would undermine the goals of the GMA which are expressed in the County's Comprehensive Plan.<sup>2</sup> Counties must take a

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 36.70A.110(4)

<sup>2</sup> Pend Oreille County Comprehensive Plan – 1.1

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number of factors into consideration when designating Agricultural Resource Lands. These include, but are not limited to soils, contiguous parcels, parcel size, tax status, and proximity of markets.

- Counties should not review natural resource lands designations in an isolated fashion. We recognize that this review is based upon a specific application received by the County; however, the request is inconsistent with the process for reviewing designated natural resource lands under the GMA.

In classifying and designating natural resource lands, counties must approach the effort as a county-wide or regional process. In accordance with WAC 365-190-040(10), counties and cities should not review natural resource lands designations solely on a parcel-by-parcel basis.<sup>3</sup> The County has an opportunity to conduct a review of its natural resource lands designations as part of the periodic review required by the GMA.<sup>4</sup>

During that review, we encourage you conserve productive natural resource lands, or those capable of productivity, and to discourage incompatible uses which could affect natural resource industries. Maintaining natural resource assets and preservation of rural character in Pend Oreille County is a priority reflected in both the GMA and the Pend Oreille County Comprehensive Plan.<sup>5</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments to your Comprehensive Plan. If you have any questions or concerns about our comments or any other growth management issues, please contact me at 509-280-3602. We extend our continued support to Pend Oreille County in achieving the goals of your community and the Growth Management Act.

Sincerely,



William Simpson  
Senior Planner  
Growth Management Services

WS:lw

cc:

David Andersen, AICP, Eastern Region Manager, Growth Management Services  
Ike Nwankwo, Western Region Manager, Growth Management Services  
The Honorable Donald Fowell, Mayor of Ione

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<sup>3</sup> WAC 365-190-040 (10)

<sup>4</sup> RCW 36.70A.130 (5)(d) and RCW 36.70A.131

<sup>5</sup> RCW 36.70A.020(8) and Pend Oreille County Comprehensive Plan – 1.2(a) and 2.4.3(#1)