The Reservoir

We use the water and we are advocates for the outstanding irrigation system developed over the last century in the Sequim region. Without it, agriculture here would not exist.

Climate may impose restrictions on the use of water from the Dungeness, and the river must serve the needs of the salmon first and foremost. The reservoir will mitigate these restrictions.

We are disappointed that the neighbors were not identified as stakeholders in the planning stages of this project. We are the ones living downstream. And the ones impacted if something goes wrong.

We have concerns. The biggest one is simply having a half billion gallons of water sitting above our heads a few thousand feet from our homes.

It is a lot of water. We have all seen the news reports of terrible storms in recent weeks, and we have seen the damage that it can do. All of the neighbor's homes are below the reservoir.

And what can go wrong? The engineers say it will be strong enough because it is being built with material dug from the site and the State will approve the dam. Yet anyone who has built or drilled a well in the area know the site is almost a gravel pit. They will say there hasn't been an earthquake in a long time and we don't get heavy storms. And yet this area is constantly preparing for earthquakes. And heavy storms happen throughout the state. Not to mention that agency funding for monitoring Dam Safety in Washington has steadily declined.

So this gives us little comfort. We fear the berm made from the material on site could breach in a seismic event. We see extreme weather in recent years, heavy rain with high winds could cause a breach in the berm. After all it is not made from concrete and steel.

How likely is it that such an event will occur? We are certain the engineers can find a formula that says our risk is one in a million. But risk, whether real or perceived, impacts a person proportional to its voluntary nature. We often make the decision to engage in risky behavior. We want to do it and we feel in control.

But not so when a half billion gallons is placed over our heads. The current 30% design presents a risk that we have no control over. It is as simple as that. Real risk or not, it is not our choice.

However, we believe we can take a simple step to increase our confidence so that we can accept the risk.

The original proposal and the one that remains before the public today shows a reservoir with a relatively low embankment. For years we have heard it would be 10 feet above the ground. That was frightening to many. But the current 30%-complete plan calls for an embankment well over 30 feet above ground level. That is a lot of water to be sitting in a basket above our heads. To the extent we can tell from the design, it appears that about two thirds of the capacity is above ground level. That is somewhere between three and four hundred million gallons of water above the ground when full.

The obvious solution is to simply dig a deeper hole and keep most of that water below ground level. The risk would be reduced dramatically. We would still have the water and it would be safely in the ground where it belongs.

To repeat,we are supportive of this project, but only with conditions. And those conditions are simple.

The reservoir project team needs to meaningfully engage the neighbors as stakeholders.

And change the design to simply dig a deeper basin, lowering the berms so that it places most of the water below ground level to reduce risk during a catastrophic event.

Thank you for your time and we ask that you continue to support the project, but with these stated conditions.

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