

RE: Lake Sammamish Water Levels

My purpose in speaking to you tonight on behalf of WA Sensible Shorelines Assoc. is to address a continuing concern among shoreline residents on Lake Sammamish. For more than a decade following year 2000 we watched and became increasingly concerned about persistent high lake levels. By 2010 the situation was so severe docks were submerged (and damaged) and access to the shore was restricted into July - far later than our usual relief in February or March.

Following this peak in 2010 a group of us began investigating why this was occurring. We found that the maintenance needed to keep the lake's outlet flowing, which King County agreed to do, was only being carried out sporadically. Worse, we found that the Corps of Engineers, though they had approved the County's trial planting of vegetation in the flood channel, subsequently warned the County that their engineers had determined flooding of our properties would result from their inadequate maintenance.

At our urging, King County increased maintenance. Lake levels improved for several years. But they have never returned to conditions provided by the Corps' flood control system - conditions that were present for more than 30 years before vegetation was added and maintenance was reduced.

I'm not going to delve into the issue of the Ordinary High Water Mark except to say that we believe that the OHWM has been artificially altered and, thus, fails the litmus test of it being a naturally occurring level.

Fortunately, there is an opportunity to mitigate abnormal lake levels - an opportunity to return to levels which the Corps continues to cite as the lake OHWM.

King County is planning a project in the floodway at Marymoor Park which could accomplish the above objective but also could fail to address the lake level problem or even make matters worse. I understand your council will be briefed on this project, called the Willowmoor Restoration Project, next week. I would like to return at that meeting and show you a brief series of slides, that we think will help you understand our concerns and explain how you can support us.

In the meantime, we have prepared and submit to you a list of key issues which remain of concern in the Willowmoor Project. As I mentioned a second ago, this project could correct deficiencies in the floodway. It can also resolve the ordinary high water level issue. PLUS, it has some worthy environmental aspects as well. BUT issues remain which we need your help to impress upon the County/Flood Control District to consider as they design the project. Doing so now will help result in an acceptable project.

Let me close by affirming our willingness to meet with any of you or respond to any questions you might have on this matter.

Respectfully,



Martin Nizlek, Bellevue Resident and Board Member - WSSA

