

Why would we re-contaminate a “very clean” Capitol Lake?

Ironically, the recently released Draft Environmental Impact Statement appears to have overlooked perhaps Capitol Lake’s greatest environmental value... protection of its 264 acres of “very clean” (swimmable) water from the toxic contaminants of Budd Bay.

These Budd Bay toxics, documented mostly from the Department of Ecology’s most recent website, are continuously derived from stormwater runoff from urban impervious surfaces, contaminated peripheral soil, LOTT Cleanwater Alliance outfall (likely within permitted limits), legacy sediment turbulence from large Port vessels, and southerly movement of marine water entering the Bay from the north. They can include (partial list): toxic metals – arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead mercury; plastic particles, contaminants of emerging concern (CEC’s); PAH’s or carcinogenic PAH’s: PCB’s; phthalates; and others.

Dozens of warning signs posted by the Thurston County Health Department exist throughout Budd Bay alerting visitors of the “Water and Soil Pollution” and to avoid clamming, crabbing, fishing, swimming, or walking in its waters. The signs recommend showering immediately after contact. References are made to “harmful chemicals” such as above, as well as bacteria and viruses.

Here’s the problem: With removal of the dam, these toxics will infiltrate the Capitol Lake basin twice daily via tidal movement. Additionally, toxics (including bacteria and viruses) from Percival Creek which drains virtually all of Olympia’s Westside will be pushed by the tides deeply into the estuary basin instead of flowing directly outward. Iconic Capitol Lake Basin will now become another notorious “Terminal Urban Estuary” known for its unsavory characteristics. Here’s but one example involving our juvenile Chinook run: Governor Inslee’s Southern Resident Orca Task Force states, “Moreover, the survival of juvenile Chinook salmon from these urbanized estuaries was 45% lower than Chinook collected from uncontaminated estuaries.”

Furthermore, dam removal could quite possibly violate Ecology’s anti-degradation regulations.

Responsible management would dictate dozens of signs to be posted in the basin, warning of the above along with entrapment (see below) and NZMS warnings. In addition to human health threats, these toxics and signs will negatively affect the basin’s ecologic functions, habitats for birds, fish (as mentioned), and mammals (our bats), aesthetic visual appeal (plus intermittent bathroom odor.), recreation use, social cohesion, and sediment cleanliness. Toxic contamination of Basin water would likely revert to levels not seen since before the dam was constructed. Once a beautiful part of our state’s capitol campus, such a contaminated body of water would be a massive community liability and an embarrassment to any city, county, state, and their governing bodies.

Regarding the exaggerated New Zealand Mud Snail “problem”, Kelly Stockton-Fiti, perhaps the most prominent national expert on the NZMS, recommends with precautions, “... the area must be open for public use”.

The entrapment issue: Signage at Budd Bay’s Ellis Cove reveals, “AT LOW TIDE MUDFLATS ARE DANGEROUS PLEASE KEEP OFF”. (A non-lethal mudflat entrapment emergency occurred here in 2017).

Our community and public officials deserve to be fully informed regarding the Lake issue. The above is but one of many examples where this obligation has failed.

Jack Havens, Bob Wubbena, Bob Holman



Health warning signs at Budd Bay adjacent to Mission Creek

If an estuary is chosen, several of these types of warning signs will likely be posted in the Capitol Lake basin as they now do in lower Budd Inlet.



Priest Point Park signage referencing Ellis Cove

Advisory reads: "Water and Soil Pollution. Shower after contact with sand or water from this area." Please note the "Caution At Low Tide, Mud Flats Are Dangerous -PLEASE KEEP OFF".