

William T. (Bill) Black
Winter
2751 Dakin Street
Bellingham, Washington 98226
Summer
309 Observation Avenue
Cordova, Alaska 99574
Salmonbill@comcast.net
360 393 8029

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William Black's 1/22/2013 Comments on GPT/Custer Spur EIS
Impact Issue is Jobs

I've lived in Whatcom County/Bellingham for many years now, 40+, while participating in the Area E salmon fishery of Alaska during the warmer halves of all these years. Area E is that Alaska Department of Fish and Game designated area which includes all the waters between Cape Suckling, on the east towards Yakutat, and Cape Fairfield, on the west towards Seward. Area E, then, includes those waters of and adjacent to the Bering/Copper Rivers and all of Prince William Sound. In a rough sort of way, Area E is comparable to Puget Sound, size-wise.

There are other ways these two areas are comparable both being Great Northwest coastal regions and similarly backed, fed and watered by the greatest snowfall pack on Earth which falls on the coastal mountains from northern California to the Alaska Peninsula put there by the same and great North Pacific Ocean.

Concerning what I understand about the entire GPT project and based upon my many years relying successfully on an estuary very similar to Puget Sound, I'm here to tell you that there is strong evidence that suggests there are many more potential "good jobs" in NOT having the sort of coal port envisioned as opposed to having the 500 ship per year coal port.

That questions, i.e. where actually are the jobs and job potential and whether or not GPT would actually eliminate more jobs and job potential than it would create?.....is what I'd like to see studied.

Significance

I understand, extremely well, the absolute need for additional meaningful and family supporting jobs in our Whatcom community. Jobs, including sole proprietor businesses, which women and men can perform with a sense of genuine satisfaction and be compensated for fairly and well are crucial to the environment we share. All of us cannot (nor would we all want to be or be capable of to) be Western profs, border guards, real estate agents or computer repair people. There is a very real need for jobs where things are created, grown, made or built. Outdoor jobs one can sink one's teeth into. Jobs like, well frankly, my own.

We, the fisher men and women of Prince William Sound did not make any money for a few years after the grounding of the Exxon Valdez. There were very few returning fish. We, at the time, did not know whether we'd EVER make enough again to stay in business. It was hard. There's been though, except for the herring which have just struggled without much recovery, enormous and amazing recovery of the salmon runs since the spill.

All this has made me very optimistic for Puget Sound.....but we've got to do a better job of not harming Puget Sound either chronically or traumatically.

Foreseeable

Marine accidents are sadly, to a great degree, inevitable. In spite of whatever we do and wherever the latest in navigation equipment takes us....there will be problems arise. Witness the December 7, 2012 incident just across the Canada/U.S. line at the Westshore coal loading dock. Just how that particular and incredible incident managed to happen is currently beyond me. I'm hoping to enclose photos of that incident for your perusal.

There's been too many cruel mornings in the course of history where the light of day reveals marine horrors from the passed darkness for us to not accept the inevitability of shipping accidents and oftentimes subsequent pollution, sometimes massive pollution.

Alternatives

I think that an alternative to GPT would be salmon hatcheries modeled after what has been established in several areas in Alaska, including Southeast, Prince William Sound and Kodiak. There is no reason we could not do it here. The two private, nonprofit, regional aquaculture corporations in Prince William Sound (Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation and the Valdez Fishery Development Association) have been returning 250 million dollars (first wholesale price) worth of fish most years. This employs thousands of people in the raising, catching, processing and selling of the beautiful fish which return annually