

To: Cris Matthews
Project Manager
Department of Ecology
913 Squalicum Way, Unit 101
Bellingham, WA 98225

Transmitted Via Online Comment Form: <http://cs.ecology.commentinput.com/?id=ic9NJ>

November 5, 2019

RE: Swift Creek Project

Dear Cris Matthews,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our comment on the Swift Creek Project. I found the presentations at the public meeting to be very informative and appreciate the work that went into delivering those. Our biggest concern with the current plan is that it is an expensive, short term fix to a long-term problem that has potential adverse health effects.

RE Sources for Sustainable Communities is a local organization in northwest Washington, founded in 1982. RE Sources works to build sustainable communities and protect the health of northwest Washington's people and ecosystems through the application of science, education, advocacy, and action. Our North Sound Baykeeper program is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the marine and nearshore habitats of northern Puget Sound and the Georgia Strait. Our chief focus is on preventing pollution from entering the North Sound and Strait, while helping our local citizenry better understand the complex connections between prosperity, society, environmental health, and individual wellbeing. Our North Sound Baykeeper is the 43rd member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, with over 300 organizations in 34 countries around the world that promote fishable, swimmable, drinkable water. RE Sources has over 20,000 members in Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan counties, and we submit these comments on their behalf.

It is well known that breathing in asbestos can lead to lung cancer, mesothelioma, or asbestosis and that exposures to heavy metals can lead to a myriad of health effects including kidney damage, neurological damage, and cancer. During the presentation it was mentioned by the Department of Health that there is no evidence of asbestos related diseases in people living in the Swift Creek drainage. Could you please provide the source of this information and explain how this will be monitored over time? Have there been any studies related to heavy metal related illnesses? Because both asbestos-related and heavy metal-related illnesses can take decades to manifest, it is important to maintain a long-term health study. The people that live in this drainage should be kept up to date on the risks.



At the public meeting it was mentioned by Whatcom County staff that this project was only expected to “manage” swift creek for about 20-25 years. This seems short sighted. Are there measures that could be done now that work toward long-term, long-lasting solutions? Are there incentives for people to leave the area or not move into the area? Could money be spent on relocation of people rather than trying to manage thousands of cubic yards of sediment every year in perpetuity? What other long-term solutions have been considered?

Thank you for your time in addressing our concerns and comments on this complex and difficult issue.

Sincerely,

Kirsten McDade
Pollution Prevention Specialist
RE Sources for Sustainable Communities