

Susan Hobbs

In 2012 with two new Board of Pend Oreille County Commissioners; commissioners elected by a Property Rights Alliance cache of followers, three term-renewing planning commission members believed to have centrist to conservation-leanings were eliminated from the planning body by the new BOCC. Today the County's community development department is lead by the BOCC's legacy-pick, a real estate developer from Idaho. He oversees the County planning body chaired by a developer, former head of the County GOP. Seated members include friends-of the BOCC who are commerce over-environment advocates Mike Manus and Karen Skoog. One member, a Skoog endorser is a real estate broker who replaced me in 2012.

Now, with all the pieces in place, the time is ripe for this built-board, not at all representative of the cross-section of citizens but of a single mind. Now they can make good on their assigned and implied roles.

Pend Oreille County is worth preserving for what it can be 'as-it-is'. The pristine environment, scenic beauty, the wildlife viewing and hunting of wild (healthy) game, the habitat that sustains us all is worth safeguarding.

Everything in the County Comprehensive Plans statement of values, goals and policies would suggest this project ought NOT to be permitted. Not at all. No continuity of land use, to name a single valid reason.

The Kalispel Tribe has offered a better direction, one that protects air, water and soil. They would move us toward agrarian, cultural and historic visitation, tiny home lodging, small enterprises such as would support a living wage for individuals participating throughout Pend Oreille County. But instead of embracing the Tribe's offer, the BOCC has dismissed them. The BOCC has little respect for the Kalispel.

Allowing the smelter to foul the air, water and soil is akin to painting over the Mona Lisa for a garage sale sign.

Sparing the environment and all who depend on it means greatly altering or recommending against PacWest's proposal.

If scrubbing technologies that spare the environment don't yet exist, they could be developed by being imposed on PacWest. The expense to undertake that effort absolutely should fall to PacWest. That is just.

Trail BC's smelter is now paying the price for decades of slag deposited in the Columbia and sent South.

There's a valid reason Canada doesn't want this smelter in their own back yard. Instead they're targeting a politically unsophisticated board, a beleaguered and distracted population absent any political clout, and relying that folks will be worn down.

Will the Department of Ecology safeguard this region? Or will Pend Oreille County be sacrificed?

Susan Hobbs

Former member Pend Oreille County Planning Commission

Former ED Cutter Theatre

Former member Pend Oreille County Library Board

Current member Coalville National Forest Resource Advisory Committee