

Elected Official

As a recently appointed water and sewer commissioner, I am newly looking into the nutrient limit discussion. In reading the proposed permit regulations (Puget Sound Nutrient General Plan, Preliminary Draft, January 2021), I have concerns that I am sure my ratepayers will also share. The draft permit states that the nutrient discharges from wastewater treatment plants "contribute" to low dissolved oxygen (DO) levels in Puget Sound (page 1). The Salish Sea Model hasn't yet been refined enough to determine the impact from point sources entering the sound (page 7). The low DO levels in Puget Sound are generally in shallow estuaries that are a significant distance away from the major wastewater treatment plants.

It is not clear from the model or testing that the changes suggested in the draft permit will have significant impact on the problem and will come at incredible expense. I have to weigh costs to benefits for my constituents and it is my judgement that the massive cost that will be required for districts to reduce nutrient loading that may not deliver the outcome desired.

There are other ways to reduce DO in shallow estuaries that are more effective and cost less to implement than what is being proposed.

I would suggest that further testing and model calibration be completed before burdening sewer districts with more stringent permit requirements.