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I strongly support any effort to improve the water quality of Whatcom creek and four of its tributaries that are on the state's list of impaired water bodies, known as the 303(d) list. Whatcom Creek has been on the impaired list since 1996.

However, Whatcom creek originates in Lake Whatcom, which is the primary water source for Bellingham (where I live) which is also rated as an impaired water body. If it is important to support recreation, and shellfish commerce, is it not even more important to force the city of Bellingham and Whatcom county to an providean unimpaired water source for its citizens? Isn't it within the scope of the department of Ecology to enforce such responsibility?

Unless the Department of Ecology sues (or otherwise legally forces) the county and the city to immediately stop letting people swim, boat and land planes in a public reservoir, the water quality of Lake Whatcom (the source of Whatcom creek) will continue to degrade until it is no longer usable. The consistent degradation of Lake Whatcom has been well documented, and yet no substantial state level enforcement has occurred. The situation has become absurd as Whatcom county (that manages the majority of the Lake and its watershed) continues to build luxury homes on the banks of the lake with boat docks and continues to allow old septic tanks and the use of pesticides in the watershed. The county also still allows clear cuts in the watershed which consistently degrades water quality. And there are unremediated toxic waste locations in the watershed including an old toxic waste dump and a heavy contaminated shooting range to name just a couple.

This is the only locality in Washington state that has these dangerous water management policies in a public reservoir. Yes, it is vital to clean up the tributaries that carry the impaired water from Lake Whatcom to the coastline. But that is the result of the dangerous and likely illegal neglect of public health and the right of the public to have access to clean water. Forcing the county and the city to immediately stop recreational use of the lake/reservoir and stop development and remediate waste in the watershed should be the first step in this project.

It is sad that Whatcom county and the city of Bellingham have no regard for their citizens access to clean water, but it is even more egregious that the department of Ecology is willing to allow this to continue. The environmental degradation in Whatcom county has led to a cancer rate that is higher than Alameda county in California that includes the city of Oakland. The cancer rate is higher than King county--this is unacceptable.

And let's not forget that Climate Change and the extreme weather it brings will only accelerate the impaired water in both Lake Whatcom and its tributaries. Please take action now.