

## Sophia Keller

As an active voter, taxpayer and conservation advocate, as well as a Pacific Northwest resident, since 1971 and a healthcare professional since 1976, I write to comment on widening riparian zones for the Elwha River. My concerns, already urgent, have now become critical in the aftermath of the recent oil spill and threat to water quality, wildlife and plant resilience.

Increasing riparian buffer zones on private lands from 50 to 75 feet is highly advisable for ALL parties involved, including the timber interests which oppose the concept. Allowing the increased protection of the wider zone will actually strengthen and accelerate harvestable growth, with a little delay for growth to occur. Pushing for swifter harvests shortens the viability of timber and limits the quality and strength of the wood acquired. It also severely limits the life cycle of wildlife habitat, which in turn degrades the timber quality and tree resilience desired.

Please widen the riparian buffer zones. Even the timber industry will thank you for your far-sightedness in the long run.