Steve Shanewise

EstuaryRestoration

I am in full support of restoring the Deschutes River Estuary. It should have already been done. However, I am very much opposed to the existing plans for "Sediment Management" in this endeavor. And it's not just because of the cost ($50,000,000 just for Budd Bay maintenance dredging let alone the much higher cost of dredging within the existing lake basin) but also what it is basically being done for which is to help keep the Deep Water Port in Olympia alive plus four private marinas around Budd Inlet. Did anyone do a cost-benefit analysis here?

Regarding the Port, this is an entity that has never turned a profit in forever if you take away the taxpayer subsidy it gets every year. And nearly all of this loss is associated with the Deep Water Port operation. How on earth does it make any sense to spend many tens of millions of tax dollars to subsidize a business enterprise that consistently fails economically? You would think the goal would be to shut down the Deep Water Port and save taxpayer dollars instead of trying to keep it alive and waste them.

Now, some would say the Port is an economic engine for Thurston County, which it is, just not the part that services ocean-going vessels. Everything else the Port manages seems to make a profit even after the taxpayer subsidies, just not the part that handles big ships. First of all, the big ship direct contribution to the local labor force is miniscule. Hell, there aren't even enough Longshoremen that work out of the Port of Olympia on a daily basis to have a good bar fight. And as to secondary jobs, well, most of the stuff imported or exported from the Port of Olympia does not originate or stay here, it just moves through in both directions. How much does that business model really benefit Thurston County as compared to other destinations?

As for the private marinas, well, they could survive sediment accumulation by eliminating sailboats in the future or relocating north to Boston Harbor where I am sure they would be warmly welcomed.

Anyway, back to the Deschutes Estuary restoration. The fact is that were it not for the Port shipping berth and the private marinas, the proposed sediment management design plans for restoration would simply involve removing the dam and blocking roadway and then just letting nature and physics handle things. That is, some already deposited material would erode away due to new river and tidal currents and then redeposit somewhere else while other locations would build up with new sediment inputs from the river. And these actions would not be static or fixed, they would be dynamic and always changing as the estuary built itself for free.