

City defends shoreline plan

Environmental groups and Tulalips challenge it

By *Janice Podsada*
Herald Writer

The city of Everett's revised Shoreline Master Program does not provide protection for shoreline wetlands or fish, attorneys told a state board at a hearing in Seattle Tuesday.

But Everett defended its plan, saying it offers the highest level of fish and habitat protection compared to any other plan in the state.

The hearing allowed the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board to hear two takes on the city's Shoreline Master Program, which designates possible land uses for properties near city shorelines and creates long-range management policies.

Challengers hammered away at the plan's failure to protect five shoreline areas: the Maulsby mud flats, Smith and Spencer islands, the Marshland site and the former Simpson property. The coalition wants to see those areas remain relatively undeveloped. Under the city's plan, some areas are designated for development.

The Everett City Council adopted an updated version of the program in April.

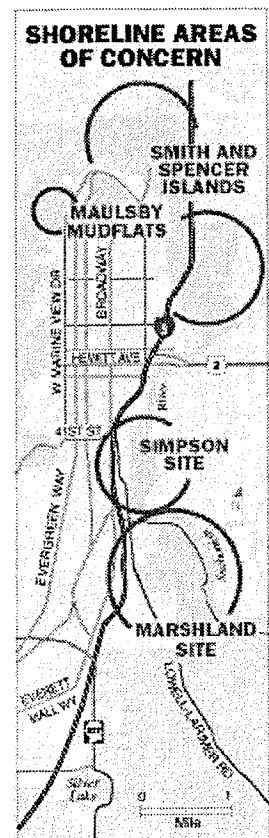
But it garnered immediate opposition from the Everett Shorelines Coalition, the Tulalip Tribes and the Washington Environmental Council. In July, each group challenged the city's plan.

The state board must use the Growth Management Act and the Shoreline Management Act as guidelines to justify its decision, scheduled for Jan. 9.

No action was taken Tuesday. According to board member Joseph Tovar, given the volume of information, it's unlikely a decision will come before the deadline.



The lagoons of Smith Island are among the areas being considered for protection under Everett's shoreline master plan, which was debated before a state board Tuesday.



JUDY STANLEY / The Herald

Challengers to Everett's revised shoreline plan say it fails to protect five shoreline areas in the map above: the Maulsby mud flats, Smith and Spencer islands, the Marshland site and the former Simpson property. The coalition wants to see those areas remain relatively undeveloped.

A decision favoring the city would allow its new shoreline plan to stand. If the board finds in favor of the coalition, the city could either appeal the decision or modify its shoreline plan.

About 25 people attended the hearing, while another 10 people were forced to sit in the lobby because there wasn't enough room.

Attorney Sharon Haensly, representing the Tulalip Tribes, the city of Everett's next-door neighbor, said the Shoreline Management Act calls for the enhancement and restoration of fish habitat. The city's plan does not provide adequate buffer zones to shield sensitive areas from development, Haensly said.

Everett's plan has the stamp of approval from the state Department of Ecology, which has final approval over all shoreline master plans.

The new plan is a revision of the city's original 1976 shoreline plan, which protected about 100 acres of shoreline for conservation. The new plan would protect more than 4,000 acres.

Attorney Eric Laschever, representing the city, said the Shoreline Management Act "is not about growth stoppage or growth prohibition. It is not shoreline protection act. Above everything else, it is about coordinated planning -- balance."

Laschever cited the city's obligation to serve a cross-section of the public, from environmentalists to private shoreline property owners. To accomplish those goals, it is necessary to create a shoreline plan that balances protection, restoration, public access and development, he said.

But David Mann, a member of the Washington Environmental Council, challenged the city's contention.

"Most of the Everett Shoreline has been developed and filled up with industrial sites," Mann said. "The balancing is over. What remains is to preserve what is left."