

FRIENDS of the San Juans



Summer 2004

The FRIENDS of the San Juans is working to...

GOAL 1 Retain Rural Character

Many of us are here because of the rolling landscapes, small towns and hamlets, active farms and farmers' markets, uncrowded roads, and the independent quality of the people who live and work here. We want this to continue.



GOAL 2 Foster a Stewardship Ethic

Our county in the sea is a unique, diverse archipelago. Preserving it requires a team effort. FRIENDS conducts educational programs and projects, from data collection to beach cleanups, which rely on our members and volunteers.

GOAL 3 Promote Livable Communities

Managing growth is a long-term task. FRIENDS publications and seminars on green construction, clustering techniques, septic systems, county-wide shared values, and sustainability provide ideas for both residents and businesses.



GOAL 4 Protect our Marine Resources

Good land-use and marine management practices are based on solid data and scientific research. FRIENDS is leading the way by sponsoring Nearshore Research, Salmon Restoration, Water Resource Studies, and Orca Protection.

GOAL 5 Hold Government Accountable

Our county government is the gatekeeper to the future of the San Juans. It is a deciding factor in what these islands will be 10, 20...50 years from now. Since 1979 FRIENDS has been urging and ensuring compliance with our local, state, and federal laws.



GOAL 6 Encourage Economic Diversity

The county's natural environment is increasingly the basis for the local economy. FRIENDS seeks thoughtful business development that supports year-round, family-wage jobs and a population mix of young people, professionals, retired people, artists, and craftspeople.

Join with us today. Every member counts.

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Cover Photo by Peter Fromm

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Printing by Harbor Press

Executive Directors Report

All eyes are on the future as FRIENDS of the San Juans celebrates its 25th Anniversary this summer. Whether you are a primary resident of the islands or a summer visitor, everyone here shares one thing in common and that's an appreciation of the natural environment. The six goals of FRIENDS reflect the priorities of islanders and visitors alike.

This summer newsletter is loaded with the choices we have as a community to influence our future. The first article, *Can Growth be "Managed"?*, is at the foundation of the choices. If growth can be managed in San Juan County, there is hope. If it can't, San Juan County culture as we know it will gradually disappear. *PROFILES of County Commissioner Candidates* introduces you to five islanders running for county commissioner in November. And *Believe It or Not, Forage Fish and Eelgrass Affect Your Lifestyle!* provides a fascinating look into our islands' underwater world.

As we begin our second 25 years, we have an opportunity to shape the San Juans of tomorrow. In 1985 FRIENDS President Bill Shockey put it: *"Individually we have little power. Together, sometimes, we can move mountains."* FRIENDS will continue

to work to "move mountains" to protect the land, water, sea, and livability of the San Juan Islands through science, education, law, and citizen action.

We urge you to enjoy this silver anniversary with us. Bring your family and friends to one of our 25th Anniversary Celebrations on Lopez (July 11 at Lopez Vineyard), San Juan (July 14 at Lavender Farm), Orcas (July 21 at Plum Tree Farm), and on Shaw (July 25 at Ellis Biological Preserve—our GRAND FINALE). Come to one or all events. We'll have local music and food.

As always, thank you for your steady support—time, interest, and dollars. We can't pursue our goals without you.

Stephanie Buffum Field



Events Calendar

June 19 - Orca Sing - San Juan

25th Anniversary Celebrations

July 11 - Lopez Vineyard

July 14 - San Juan - Lavender Farm

July 21 - Orcas - Plum Tree Farm

July 25 - Shaw - Ellis Biological Preserve.

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News Updates

Hamlet Planning on Orcas Island

Residents of Orcas Island hamlets (Orcas Village, Olga, Deer Harbor, Doe Bay, and West Sound) have requested the Community Development & Planning Department to provide a time-line for completing hamlet plans. Some residents have been waiting since 1993 for the county to complete these plans. FRIENDS board member, Irmgard Conley from Olga, stated that three Hamlet Plans on Orcas were nearly 90 percent complete before Senior Planner Pat Mann left the county over a year ago. Mann has not yet been replaced.

EDC Awarded \$75,000 by State

In April the embryonic San Juan County Economic Development Council (EDC) was awarded \$75,000 for marine technology cluster development within the county. The award is to foster the sensitive expansion of good jobs in a rural, maritime environment. The award caps a year of solid achievements by EDC, which is gaining momentum across the county. A FRIENDS officer has been on the board since EDC started in July 2002.

Round Three of the Guest House Debate

In early March 2004, FRIENDS won a third major victory in the ongoing dispute over allowing a rentable, second residence on almost every rural lot in the islands. The state legislature failed to support the BOCC's attempt in late March to circumvent GMA and allow the construction of new ADUs—independent of parcel size. Unfortunately, this latest victory does not mean the ADU issue has been resolved. On March 24, 2004 San Juan County announced that it will appeal the latest ruling by Thurston County Superior Court Judge Berschauer. In January he upheld a key decision of GMA and Judge McPhee, prohibiting a second Accessory Dwelling unit (ADU) where parcels did not meet the minimum density standards. At press time FRIENDS was exploring settlement options with the county. It is important to note what is NOT in the dispute between FRIENDS and the county commissioners: An owner with a parcel that meets existing, minimum

density standards is *already* allowed to build a detached ADU. And ADU's that existed before the current ADU moratorium are, and will remain, *unaffected* by any new decision.

Canoe Journey 2004: Volunteers & Support Boats Needed in July



Native American sea-going canoes will paddle through San Juan County during the last week of July. Paddlers and their support crews will spend one night each on Lopez and San Juan before crossing Haro Strait into Canada. Volunteers are needed to prepare and serve food and to assist with welcoming ceremonies. Also needed are support boats (sea-going, power & sail) to escort canoes into Canada. Support boats are welcome to join the Journey to Shell Beach, near Ladysmith on Vancouver Island, BC.

Fundraising to Expand Programs

In March FRIENDS Development Manager, Shannon Davis, and Office Manager, Jana Marks attended a week-long seminar put on by the Indiana University Center for Philanthropy. Course tuition and travel were funded by the Dottie Rosso Scholarship Fund and the Environmental Support Center.

PROFILES of Candidates for County Commissioner

by Janet Thomas

Two Commissioners (of three) will be elected in November. One will replace Darcie Nielsen (District 1) and one will fill the position currently held by John Evans (District 2). Candidates must reside in their Districts, but voters across the county vote on the candidates for both positions in September (Primaries) and November.

DISTRICT 1

Covering San Juan, Henry, Pearl, Stuart, Johns, and Brown islands.

• **Ray Bigler** was forced out of business when his Friday Harbor grocery store burned two years ago. “Those three days were a black hole in my life,” says Bigler. He tried to find a way to restart in the almost completed new building, but the rents were too steep. “Everybody would get paid but me.”



Bigler began in the grocery business in Everett after graduating from the University of Washington. He later opened stores in Seattle and on Federal Way. The I-5 commute finally took its toll. “I was afraid I wouldn’t see 60.” In 1993 Bigler, and his wife Julie Palmer, who owns Velvet Touch Professional Pet Grooming, moved to Friday Harbor.

He had first visited the islands with his family in the ‘50s. After

earning his pilot’s license in 1987, the visits increased. “I used to fly in with my brother-in-law for lunch at Roche Harbor.” Bigler cited the approaching view of the islands from the air as the reason so many pilots end up living in the San Juans. He is one of approximately two dozen pilots who volunteer their services to cancer patients undergoing treatment in Sedro Wooley.

Bigler lost his youth to the Vietnam War and it had a major impact on him. “I used up more than my nine lives,” he said. In 1965, at age 18, he began four years in the U.S. Army Intelligence. He spent time on the border of Laos and Thailand monitoring movements of the Chinese and Vietnamese. In the field he worked to help the Hmong tribal people in Laos. Bigler is not afraid of expressing his grief about those years, particularly about nurses who served in the war. “They were unsung heroes,” he says.

Last year a group from San Juan Island who prefer to remain anonymous approached Bigler about running for county commissioner. It came as a surprise to him, but after discussing his possible candidacy with more than a hundred people, Bigler decided to run. He began attending commissioner meetings last September and announced his candidacy in November. “I’m not a politician so I don’t know about campaigning,” he says. “So I’ve surrounded myself with people who do know about it.”

Bigler is proud of his track record as a small business owner. “Over 25 years I had a direct impact on thousands of peoples lives. A certain wisdom comes with signing the front of a paycheck instead of just the back.” His military experience affected him, too. “In the service they told you the mission but not how to accomplish it. For somebody 20 years old, that’s a pretty daunting responsibility.”

• **Ralph Hahn** is coming out of retirement to run for county commissioner. “I was looking for interesting work,” said Hahn, who spent 34 years in education.

He spent much of his life in Whittier, CA but his roots are in the northwest. His great-grandfather came to the west coast from Germany in the late 1850s and started a mercantile company in Portland. “The northwest was the only place I wanted to live,” he says,” but it took me 50 years to get back.” Hahn was first introduced to the islands in 1970 when he and his wife, Marci, visited his aunt who lived in a cabin on Garrison Bay (SJI).



Hahn taught English and History in high school for 12 years before entering administration. He was assistant principal in Whittier for three years before he became the

DISTRICT 2

Covering Orcas, Waldron, Crane, and Obstruction islands.

• **John Evans** has been a San Juan County Commissioner for 12 years. It was in 1961, on his way to Victoria with a fraternity buddy, that he first encountered the San Juans. “They made a huge impression,” he says. He bought an aging strawberry farm, the “old Moultry Place,” on Orcas in 1973.

After studying journalism and marketing at the University of Oregon, Evans taught high school for two years before

going to work in marketing for Sambo’s restaurant chain. In 1976 he started



rebuilding the farm on Orcas. In 1978, he left Sambo’s and moved to Santa Barbara to start a 40-acre nursery raising cut flowers. His son eventually took over the nursery when Evans and his wife, Wanda, moved permanently to Orcas Island in 1986.

Evans initial inspiration to run for county commissioner had to do with preserving Coon Hollow Road, a winding rural road threatened with being made flat, wide, and straight. He ran for office, won, and the original nature of Coon Hollow Road was both protected and made safer. This interest in local roads led Evans to start a scenic roads program in the county.

Evans is passionate about how the sense of community on Orcas Island has sustained itself. “There are still community potlucks,” he says. “I’m excited about how much people love this community and how willing they are to participate. It hasn’t changed; keeping it is essential.”

principal of Sonoma High School for 12 years. In 1997 Hahn was made principal at Friday Harbor High School. He retired in 2002.

Four months after retirement he was back in public life as an Island Rec board member. Hahn is also active in the Public Schools Foundation, the Knowledge Bowl, the Westcott Bay Board, and Kiwanis. And he’s teaching 20th Century American History at Skagit College.

“Island life is a lot less formal than it used to be,” says Hahn. “There’s greater stridency. Every issue has a life or death quality. I love finding solutions. It’s really interesting to solve the puzzle.”

• **Kevin Ranker** considers his grandmother a primary reference point for his life. As a child he lived with her on Orcas, and as an adult,



he is inspired by her passion and activism. “Her story isn’t that unusual for the islands,” he says. “She was a dean at Pacific Oaks

University in California and then decided she’d rather live on Orcas and teach kindergarten.” Ranker, who attended elementary school on Orcas, calls her a “real inspiration and a true conservationist.” Bea Ranker protested the poisonous spraying of roadsides on Orcas by joining a group of women who laid down in the road to prevent the spray truck from unloading off the ferry. “That is why they now mow and don’t spray.”

As a kid, Ranker remembers fishing for salmon off the dock in Deer Harbor—and catching them. He also remembers the balls of herring—now 70 percent depleted in Puget Sound. He thinks a lot about how his experience in the San Juans

is different from that of old-timers as well as newcomers.

Ranker, who returned from L.A. in the early ‘90s, was Executive Director of FRIENDS of the San Juans before taking his current position with the Surfrider Foundation. It is an organization of fishermen, sailors, divers, paddlers, surfers and others who share a passion for coastal recreation. He is in charge of the coastal regions of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Alaska and Baja. Ranker is also a founding member of the Advisory Board of the UC Davis-based, SeaDoc Society. It has a \$2.4 million research program to ensure the health of marine wildlife and their ecosystems in the San Juans.

“I’m a water man—fourth generation. My father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all sailors, divers, and fishermen. I could never live inland.” Ranker feels he has a dream job with Surfrider. It took him a great deal of thought before he decided to run for county commissioner. “I have enjoyed my time nationally and internationally, but I want to work here in my home again.”

Ranker has degrees in coastal ecology and community development. He also cites nine years of policy making, legislation formulation, and fundraising as parts of his skill-set, things he feels are very important for the future of San Juan County. He counts among his heroes Cesar Chavez, who carried out a non-violent movement to improve the lot of farm workers in California and across the country, and Paulo Freire who wrote “Pedagogy of the Oppressed.”

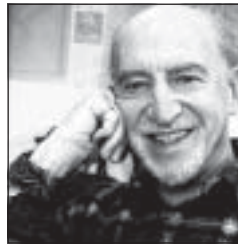
Ranker, who lives on San Juan Island, is close to his family, which still has a home on Orcas.

Another vital interest is the Olga Community Cemetery, which is available as a burial site free to anybody who lives in Olga or Doe Bay. The graves there are still dug by hand by members of the community. The Evans farm now has a landscape nursery and a few strawberries; the Evans' also breed Icelandic horses and Jacob sheep and keep 60 chickens. They sell fresh eggs at the hardware store and take turns with farm chores. Wanda, an EMT, is an active person in the Doe Bay community; she is on the Olga Cemetery Board and the Doe Bay Water Board. John is a volunteer firefighter in Doe Bay.

• **Alan Lichter** was born and raised in Boston and introduced to the northwest when he served at Fort Lewis 1955-57. He received his PhD in American Literature at the University of Washington. There, as a graduate student, he was active in mediating the dispute between students, police, and merchants during the 1960s street riots in Seattle. He's a poet who loves basketball, a pilot who loves to hike, and a professor who listens to his wife. "My wife started pushing me," he says, referring to his decision to run for office. "You can bring people together better than anyone I know," she told him.

Lichter and his wife, Kate, a yoga teacher, first visited Orcas as campers in the '60s. Their love affair with both hiking and Moran State Park has been a long one, and they continue weekly in their role as resource stewards at the park. Seven years ago Lichter started the men's hiking club, the Tough Trekkers, on Orcas; Club members meet and hike regularly. "I love the beauty of the islands and the freedom I feel inside because of this beauty."

In his professional life Lichter taught poetry, fiction writing, and children's literature at the University of Kansas. He has given readings and conducted guest seminars in American, European, and Scandinavian universities. He was a Fulbright Professor in Poland during the growth of the Solidarity Movement. As a poet and literary critic, his work has appeared in both American and foreign publications.



"It's a quicker, faster, louder pace of life," he says in response to a question about how the islands have changed since he first visited. "There are more sidewalks, commercial activities and people here from every part of the country. I miss the more traditional ways, like agriculture and farming. And I'd like to see a reverse of damage done to our marine life."

Lichter is an avid pilot. Even before announcing his candidacy, he started flying to San Juan and Lopez islands regularly to do his county homework. "So far, I've met with every county department head." Lichter is president of Air Hawk Aviators, a non-profit group that provides scholarships for local teenagers interested in obtaining pilot licenses. He is also one of the volunteer Orcas pilots who fly patients off-island for medical treatments.

—*Janet Thomas teaches writing on Orcas and San Juan Islands, through Skagit Valley College. She is also the author of a book.*

As an IRS 501(c)(3) community organization, FRIENDS is prohibited from endorsing political campaigns or supporting candidates.

New Form for County Government?

San Juan County currently has a "Commission" form of government. It has three elected *commissioners* and six other elected officials (Auditor, Assessor, Clerk, Prosecutor, Sheriff, Treasurer) who operate semi-independently. The three commissioners have overlapping legislative, judicial, and executive functions. This basic form was established by the state in 1889, and it is the form used in 34 of the state's 39 counties even today.

In 1948 the state constitution was amended to allow any county's voters to adopt a "Home Rule" form of government. To do so, citizens have to write their own county "Charter." Five counties now have adopted a Home Rule Charter—King ('69), Clallam & Whatcom ('79), Snohomish ('80), and Pierce ('81). In general, voters in these counties approved local Charters to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their counties.

In the San Juans, a multi-island group called Islanders for a Charter Government has emerged over the last six months. The group of approximately 100 has requested the three county commissioners to put the subject on the November 2, 2004 ballot. In April the Commissioners indicated a willingness to do this. If voters agree in November to consider a Charter, they will also be asked to elect 15-25 islanders (called "Freeholders") from across San Juan County. The elected Freeholders will draft a Charter. That draft would then be submitted to the voters for approval in 2005 or 2006. For information on the Charter group, visit www.sjgoodgovernment.org.

Editorial Can Growth be “Managed”?

NO

MAYBE

YES

There are 12,000 environmental organizations in the USA, according to the IRS. Across these groups the most common objective (63.4%) is “Preservation of Resources.” This objective is a headliner here in the San Juan Islands, too. Conference after conference, meeting after meeting, islanders strive to preserve and protect everything from shorelines and farmland to whales, views, and “our future.” The underlying premise is that, somehow, growth can be managed. If it can, there is hope. If it can’t, the San Juan County culture as we know it will gradually disappear. Can growth be managed? Here are three points of view.

NO!

Some people say that managing growth is impossible. Clearly, the pressures to make this small county in the sea into an I-5 burb of some kind are immense. San Juan County has already experienced accelerated growth for twenty years, and the baby-boomer generation, estimated at 76 million, is just now starting to retire. *“As baby boomers are leaving the labor force, they are lining up their second or retirement homes,”* says Kathleen Camilli, an economist, in January in the national newspaper, *Christian Science Monitor*. The facts are that many other quality-of-life communities have had very limited success, at best, in resisting the pressures. The San Juan County Planning Department had this

reaction to a consultant’s report in 2000: *“The report does not provide much hope that the San Juans might be different from Nantucket, Aspen, Martha’s Vineyard, etc. On the contrary, the similarities in size, scale, access, environment, and trends make us look very much like those communities as they were 20 to 30 years ago. The San Juans appear to be headed in the same direction.”*

MAYBE...

The consultant went on to say: “The test for the San Juans is now. You will have to control and moderate growth. There are some quite good ideas out there, (but) none of the communities mentioned installed them early enough. Fortunately, that option is still available for the San Juans.”

Experience suggests that controlling growth, like democracy itself, is not a pretty process. Today the key ingredients are well known. They include:

General agreement about what the community is to become over the long term. Without a solid base of support, there is virtually no chance of managing growth in any significant way.

Hard choices. Housing and open space each require land. More people require more public services such as fresh water, deputies, solid waste disposal, and medical care, which typically require more property tax revenues. More cars lead to demands

for more parking and wider, straighter roads. Difficult, trade-off decisions must be made, not avoided. As one county commissioner put it: “There are no free lunches.”

Compromise in the context of a long-term perspective. To manage growth, rather than be a servant to it, a plan is required. There is no other way to codify the aspirations of the community, catalog choices made, enumerate steps of implementation, and track what actually happens over time. Planning, however, is not linear. It is cyclical. Most often it starts off with a big dose and tapers off. Sometime later, another big- or medium-size dose is needed. For example, the State’s Growth Management Act (GMA), which San Juan County Commissioners opted to plan under in 1990, requires that comprehensive plans be reviewed every five years.

Effective planning is goal-driven and usually frustrating for many people, including county officials. But that’s the nature of a public process dealing with lifestyle issues.

Community leadership. The San Juan archipelago has its own unique ecology, geography, economy, and rhythm of life. Islands differ from one another, too, and inhabitants here often identify with their own particular island more readily than with the county as a whole. The simple task of having meetings of citizens from multiple islands is a challenge much of the year, given that

our islands are separated by a restless sea. Overall, community leadership in the San Juans is complicated.

With these required ingredients, the jury is still out on whether seriously managing growth is realistic here. Maybe.

YES!!

The track record since 1990 suggests that hope is justified. Here are highlights:

1990. The county opted to plan under the Growth Management Act (GMA).

1992. County commissioners adopted regulations to protect agricultural lands, forests, wetlands, fish & wildlife habitats, aquifer recharge areas, unstable slopes, and flood-prone locations.

1993. County-wide Vision statement was crafted over many months by a multi-island task force with the participation of over 300 islanders. The Vision was adopted by county commissioners as the guide to the development of a new Comprehensive Plan for the county.

1998. Comprehensive Plan adopted by county commissioners. It includes a Unified Development Code with regulations for implementing the plan. The plan still lacks certain required elements, however, to satisfy the Vision of San Juan County citizens and meet the Washington State GMA requirements.

1999 on. Legal challenges, adjustments, compromises, etc. that are on-going, but typically not fatal. The continuing debate over transient rentals and guest houses—attached or unattached—and residential density requirements is a case in point.

2000. Revised Comprehensive

Plan adopted with significant reductions in allowable residential densities on shorelines, resource lands, and many rural areas.

Does this record make any difference? Looking around, the impact is unclear at this point. The San Juan County population expanded 40% to 14,077 between 1990-2000. This is the second highest growth rate in Washington.

Ferry use between the mainland and Friday Harbor or Orcas Island, in the five years beginning in 1999 and ending in 2003, increased significantly—cars, big trucks, and foot passengers. In 2003 there were 700 home sales in the county. And Friday Harbor's airport is the 10th busiest in the state with 65,000 landings and take-offs a year.

Meanwhile, according to the weeklies, the *Journal* and the *Souder*, the median price for a home in the San Juas in October 2003 was \$415,000, the highest in the 13-county region tracked by the local multiple listing service. This trend is driving assessed values and, therefore, property taxes, upwards. And, in a related matter, the sale of building materials and services accounted for over half of the \$280 million in taxable sales last year.

At the same time:

Over 46% of the county's 17,000 legal parcels of land are yet undeveloped as of the end of 2003.

Fewer than 50 of the 172 islands in the entire archipelago are potentially available for private development.

The fact that the environment is the basis of the economy seems to be increasingly recognized across all the layers of opinion in San Juan County.

The Land Bank, a public agency

approved by voters in 1990 and again in 2000, now owns 917 acres of important land in the county.

The San Juan Preservation Trust holds title to 787 acres on various islands plus conservation easements on a number of parcels that could otherwise be developed and occupied.

Preserving and protecting the San Juans' natural character is a common theme for all of the candidates running for the two open Board of Commissioners positions in November of this year.

Since the 1998 adoption, the Comprehensive Plan and its regulations have already been amended several times in ways that are consistent with managing growth proactively.

There *is* cause for optimism. Growth can be managed if the will to do so persists among islanders.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

The county agenda for the next few years is already crowded. It includes:

- Completing plans for “non-rural growth” in Eastsound and Lopez Village.
- Completing plans for “hamlets” in Deer Harbor, Olga, West Sound, Doe Bay, and Orcas Village.
- Protecting and enhancing water supplies in Lopez Village.
- Determining by December 2005 how to use “best available science” to protect wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat, and other critical areas, as mandated by recent changes in state law.
- Updating local shoreline regulations to comply with changing state laws.
- Implementing the work of the county's two-year-old Economic Development Council, which is

ferreting out ways to create family-wage jobs doing work compatible with retaining the natural assets of the county.

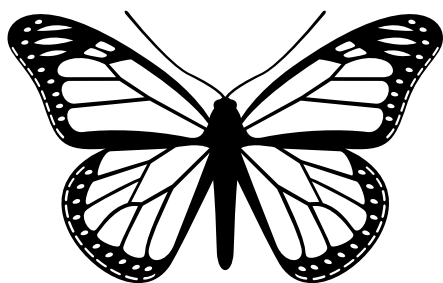
- Finishing reallocation of population projections among the islands, using the 2000 census.
- Using the updated projections to establish new, affordable housing targets for the designated “urban growth areas” and “hamlets” in the county.
- Determining (County and Town of Friday Harbor in joint effort) if new urban growth area acreage is needed, where it might go, and how it would be supported with existing or expanded public services.
- Preparing water resource conservation and enhancement plans for Lopez Island (salt intrusion is serious there) and for Eastsound.
- Updating capital facilities and transportation elements to reflect the new population projections.
- Paving the way for broadband and related infrastructure technology that is important to the economic future of the county.

These are not simple issues.

THE CHALLENGE.

Can growth be managed?

The answer is a qualified “yes” if enough islanders pay attention and lend a hand.



WHY BOTHER?

The consequences of unmanaged growth (in any prime, small-scale community) are well known today, even predictable:

GENTRIFICATION

This means the displacement of lower-income people by upper-income people, resulting in a loss of diversity in a community.

INDEPENDENCE BLUNTED

As additional people are packed together in the fixed area of the San Juan Islands, more rules of conduct are required to lubricate social interactions. And more rules almost always leads to more rule makers and rule keepers, namely a larger, county government staff & budget.

SOARING LAND COSTS

A basic law of economics is that escalating demand in the face of a finite supply leads to an increase in the cost of the item, be it diamonds or land in the San Juans. As land and housing prices rise, wage-earning families find they must move on.

CRY FOR CONVENIENCES

Urbanites attracted to the islands for their beauty sometimes discover they are personally dependent on many city niceties. So they seek to import them, often to the detriment of rural practices.

DECREASE IN PRIVACY

Population increases inevitably reduce the relative open space between people—at home, on the road, in town.

TRANSPORTATION TANGLES

As urban driving habits and delivery truck and car volume overwhelm the state’s aging ferry system and the county’s country road system, something has to give.

HIGHER PROPERTY TAXES

See Table I below.

INCREASED DEPENDENCE ON SEASONAL TOURISM

Some of the previous factors listed preclude the development of new product and service businesses to replace the basic industries of the past. Tourism partially fills the gap.

LOSS OF WILDLIFE

Fish, birds, foxes...they all require space, open space, their habitats.

LOSS OF PLACE

Unmanaged growth allows, even encourages, the importation of a hodgepodge of values and styles from everywhere else.

SO WHY BOTHER?

Because to islanders the price of inattention, non-participation, and non-action is steep.

**Table I
COST OF GROWTH**

Studies across the US have shown that tax revenues from new homes are less than the tax dollars actually required to pay for the additional services required.

Examples of the ratios of the **cost of serving** the new homes to the **tax revenue received** from them include:

San Juan County, WA	1.32
Skagit County, WA	1.25
Cassia County, ID	1.19
Gallatin County, MT	1.45
Carroll County, MD	1.15
Cache County, UT	1.27
Clarke County, VA	1.26

In every case studied, existing taxpayers subsidized services for new residents.

News Updates (continued)

Volunteers Keep the San Juans Clean and Healthy for Marine Life



Thanks to all the individuals, families, and community groups that have volunteered their time to FRIENDS this spring.

Waldron Island. Josie Scruton, Susan Bucknell, and Ryan Drum for their work on exploratory

herring spawning surveys.

Orcas Island. OASIS Home School students for their assistance with forage fish surveys and the implementation of a coastal reforestation project; Orcas Christian School students, and Deer Harbor Boatworks for removing debris from Orcas Island beaches.

Lopez Island. Jeanine Flynn, Pat Meacham, and Dan Silkiss of Project WET team for their roles in planting & maintaining the forage fish habitat restoration site. Mattola Family for beach cleanup.

Shaw Island. Jed and Allison Lenygel and the 4-H Watershed Group for their involvement in reintroducing vegetation to a summer, surf smelt spawning site. Helen Ball for beach cleanup.

San Juan Island. Lion's Club for three spring beach cleanups at South Beach; and the 4-H Dog group, for cleaning the popular beach at Eagle Cove; Bob Lemon, Judy Miller, the Balise, Kaufman, and Keil families for beach cleanup.

Make a friend a FRIEND this Summer

FRIENDS of the San Juans is celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year. Shannon Davis, Membership Manager, launched *Make a friend a FRIEND* in February with the distribution of a new membership brochure and "Keep The San Juans Green" bumper stickers. Both are

available for use by our members and readers. Call Shannon at 360-378-2319.

More members will help FRIENDS accomplish its six goals shown on the inside of the front cover. Visit the FRIENDS website at www.sanjuans.org.

Grant Updates

FRIENDS has completed a county-wide eelgrass survey through funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Findings from this survey identified a massive eelgrass meadow decline throughout the Westcott/Garrison Bay complex on San Juan Island. \$30,000 from the Bullitt Foundation will support research into the potential of upland and shoreline impacts on critical habitat in this area. These impacts will be integrated with aquatic-based research led by Dr. Sandy Wyllie-Echeverria.

This spring the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded FRIENDS \$62,000 to support its Nearshore Protection Campaign. This campaign will develop voluntary strategies to protect and restore priority nearshore habitat for salmon and forage fish in San Juan County.

The Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation has pledged \$3,000 to support Tribal Canoes as they travel through San Juan County in July.

We appreciate the ongoing support from these innovative foundations who are dedicated to helping preserve the marine environment and resources of the San Juan Archipelago.

Board and XC Meets Regularly

Either the FRIENDS Board or the Executive Committee has met each month this year to deal with many matters including finances, term limits, business donors, staffing, and goals.

(More updates on following page)

SJC Water Resource Management Plan Available for Public Review

In April 2004 a companion report to the S.J.C. Phase 2 Basin Assessment was completed to meet the state's freshwater, watershed planning requirement. This assessment has three main purposes:

- To characterize water resources in San Juan County.
- To provide a scientific basis for developing a watershed plan.
- To provide state and county agencies with the information required to effectively manage natural resources.

The assessment covered rainfall and streamflow conditions in the county. Researchers also compared water use to groundwater availability (San Juan County's water "balance" or "budget"). The assessment contains information on water rights and the related groundwater availability in the county. Overall, the assessment provides a generalized picture of areas with adequate groundwater supplies and areas at risk of experiencing depleted, available groundwater resources. The assessment indicates that there are areas in the county where groundwater usage exceeds what is available, and county-wide, the amount of groundwater allocated by water rights exceeds what is available.

The results of this report provide a framework for San Juan County to develop local solutions to protect fresh water resources. To request a copy of this report, contact Mark Tompkins or Vicki Heater at the San Juan Department of Community Health at 360-378-4474.

Protecting Three Rare Butterflies

FRIENDS and a coalition of scientific and conservation organizations will initiate a lawsuit to protect the Taylor's checkerspot, Mardon skipper, and Island marble butterflies. These are three of the rarest butterflies in the Northwest. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be named in the suit.

Definitive scientific evidence was presented over a year ago that the butterflies are rapidly heading toward extinction and require federal protection. But no action has been taken. The Island marble is found only on San Juan Island, Washington. The Mardon skipper occurs in four small geographically isolated populations in south Puget Sound, southern Washington Cascades, southern Oregon Cascades, and coastal northern California. The Taylor's checkerspot only occurs in twelve populations in south

Puget Sound and Oregon's Willamette Valley, all but three of which contain fewer than fifty butterflies.

"In Washington, only about 3 percent of the butterflies' prairie habitat remains, and it is threatened by development, pesticides, invasive plants, grazing, and other factors," reports Stephanie Buffum Field, FRIENDS Executive Director. *"Protection for the butterflies will prevent additional habitat destruction and help recovery."*



Home Rule charter process begins

On May, 11 the majority of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) agreed to place an election of freeholders* on the November 2004 ballot. The freeholders will then draft a new home rule charter for San Juan County. Voters will have the final say on whether the charter is adopted. Two previous efforts in the 1970s and 80s failed.

If approved, freeholders can change the structure of county government. Changes could include having elected officials appointed. Prosecutors and judges are exempt from home rule. Some or all elected positions could become non-partisan. Appointed positions could become elected. Other possible changes affect the number of commissioners. The majority of home rule charter counties have adopted a council/executive form of government.

The BOCC will decide how many freeholders there will be and how the positions will be apportioned. In 1983, there was one freeholder selected from each voting precinct. Candidates are self-nominated. In Whatcom County there were more than 70 candidates for the 21-member board.

* Read *New Form for County Government* on page six of this newsletter.

Video Conferencing on Horizon

A number of providers will begin offering fiber optic broadband throughout San Juan County. Cathy Cavanagh, President of the SJ Economic Development Council, feels video conferencing has huge possibilities here. She says, *"Boards of nonprofits, such as the FRIENDS and the Textile Guild, can meet face-to-face without spending hours on ferries."*

Believe It or Not, Forage Fish and Eelgrass Affect Your Lifestyle!

by Tina Whitman, Environmental Programs Manager

What is your favorite San Juan summer, outdoor activity? Viewing majestic orca and Minke whales? Fishing for salmon or lingcod? Feasting on Dungeness crab? Watching birds? Walking on the beach? Each of these activities can provide us with a strong sense of place here in the San Juans. And each is directly related to the health of forage fish and the nearshore marine environments that support them.

Forage fish are the small fish that larger fish eat. Locally our primary forage fish are Pacific herring, surf smelt and Pacific sand lance. Research in nearby Georgia Strait shows that between 50% and 75% of the diets of the Coho salmon, Chinook salmon, ling cod, and halibut caught consist of forage fish. While Minke whales eat huge portions of forage fish directly, the orcas depend on the small fishes to fatten the salmon they consume.

Nearshore, shallow-water beds of eelgrass provide food and shelter for over 70 species of fish and innumerable invertebrates, including Dungeness crab. Local seabirds, including the marbled murrelet and rhinoceros auklet, feed directly on forage fish; surf scoters dive underwater for the herring eggs incubating on eelgrass and other submerged vegetation. The nearshore also includes the upper regions of sandy beaches that provide a safe location for surf smelt and Pacific sand lance to incubate their eggs. These eggs hatch and the tiny fish in

a larval stage float out with the tide to become part of the food chain.

Vital nearshore environments are at risk today from many activities occurring in our islands. Logging and home development send sediments into inlets and bays, limiting light and coating shallower bays in a layer of mud. Docks and marinas block the sunlight that eelgrass must have to grow. Pollution from storm water runoff and failing septic systems hurt water quality. Shoreline structures—boat ramps, seawalls, and bulkheads—eliminate spawning beaches by directly covering the habitat or cutting off the supply of sand and gravel required by forage fish to successfully incubate their eggs. Starting in 2000, FRIENDS has been coordinating the first-ever comprehensive surveys and mapping of forage fish and eelgrass beds in San Juan County. Working with the SJC Marine Resources Committee and the Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, the objective has been to gather the scientific information

required to protect and restore critical nearshore spawning habitats.

NEW SPAWNING SITES DISCOVERED IN SJC

FRIENDS staff and volunteers documented spawn activity at 50 local beaches, 39 (62%) of which were previously undocumented sites. The field teams visited over 600 individual beaches on 24 islands. The data collected by FRIENDS was combined with existing data from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. As a result, 72 spawning sites—on a total of almost 13 shoreline miles of the San Juans—are now protected under state “No Net Loss” regulations.

Over 300 students and 100 community volunteers participated in the work. As one volunteer put it:

“Everyone was enthused be-cause we were discovering new spawning sites and the information was leading directly to protection. We could really see the results of our efforts.”

San Juan County Forage Fish Spawning Sites, By Island

	Surf Smelt		Sand Lance		Pacific Herring	
Blakely	2					
Decatur	1					
Lopez	16	.....	3	.....	1	
Orcas	9	.....	2	.....	2	
San Juan	16	.....	3	.....	1	
Shaw	13	.....			1	
Stuart	1					
Waldron	1					
TOTAL	59	+	8	+	5	= 72

Source: FRIENDS San Juan County Forage Fish Project 2004

DRAMATIC EELGRASS DECLINE

To provide a complete picture of our eelgrass beds, FRIENDS secured grant funding and engaged renowned seagrass expert Sandy Wyllie-Echeverria and regional marine researcher Jim Norris to map nearshore eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) beds. The scientists used underwater videography and hydro-acoustic instruments. Monitoring protocols were aligned with those used by the Washington Department of Natural Resources so that San Juan data will be widely useable. Minimum and maximum depths of the eelgrass communities were recorded. Here in the County and in the nearby Strait of Juan de Fuca, relatively clear water supports eelgrass growth at deeper levels than in the remainder of the Puget Sound area. Our clear waters allow sunlight to penetrate. Eelgrass was recorded at depths as deep as 30 feet or more near some county islands.

Our mapping results provide a baseline of eelgrass communities. By understanding current conditions, we can focus future research on priority topics and make land management recommendations based on solid science. Results will help researchers track changes in the connectivity, or patchiness, of eelgrass communities. Connectivity is an important factor in supporting salmon as they use nearshore corridors of eelgrass for nursery, feeding, and migration.

Detailed sampling was also done at six San Juan sites to catalog the diversity and abundance of invertebrate species utilizing eelgrass beds. These beds are often referred to as underwater rainforests for their high productivity. This component of the project was used to develop protocols that citizens could use to

evaluate the relationships between seagrass landscapes (patchiness, cover) and the epibenthic creatures (salmon prey) that inhabit them.

Unfortunately, FRIENDS' surveys confirmed declines in some of our critical, submerged plant communities that were documented by Dan Penttila, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife biologist, during the 2002 and 2003 field seasons. The losses include over 35 acres of eelgrass habitat in Westcott and Garrison Bays on San Juan Island, as well as a smaller, but significant, decline in Blind Bay on Shaw Island.

This loss of eelgrass is troubling as Westcott and Blind Bays comprise two of the five known herring spawning sites in the San Juan Islands. Dan Penttila commented last winter on what the loss of eelgrass habitat might mean for herring:

"The Westcott Bay herring stock, if it homes back to this particular bay as expected, will now be required to deposit its eggs on patches of shallow subtidal red algae, around the entrance to Westcott Bay."

Tagging efforts in the San Juans have identified 16 stocks of Coho and five federally listed stocks of endangered Chinook. Healthy herring populations and nearshore habitats are an essential part of salmon recovery efforts in the San Juans.

To address this loss of important habitat, FRIENDS is participating with an interdisciplinary team of managers and scientists who are working to determine the cause. Participants include the University of Washington, the SeaDoc Society, Washington State Departments of Natural Resources, Ecology, and Fish and Wildlife, and the Batelle Marine Sciences Lab.

Because of the crucial role eelgrass

beds play in the life cycle of salmon and their major prey, field biologists from around the region have been alerted to be on the lookout for similar declining trends. And researchers from New England have been contacted to see if our eelgrass is showing any of the symptoms of the disease catastrophe that hit New England eelgrass beds in the 1930's. So far, no one cause stands out clearly, but the cumulative effects of a whole array of impacts, from local pollution and boat anchoring to global climate change, are being explored. The loss of eelgrass in Westcott and Blind Bays is taken as a call to action regarding the health of our nearshore marine environment.

In the next newsletter, we will report further on FRIENDS actions to move from science to stewardship.

WORKSHOPS

Alternatives to Coastal Shoreline Armoring

• *September 7-11, 2004*

This workshop will feature classroom presentations on each ferry-serviced island and a Saturday boat trip to past shoreline softening project sites on Orcas and Blakely Islands. It will be led by Jim Johannessen, a coastal geologist with extensive San Juan Islands experience.

Educator Workshop

• *October 23, 2004*

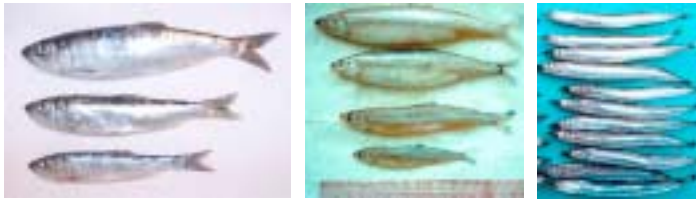
This is a full-day program with classroom, field and lab components, as well as a take-home curriculum to aid in student involvement with forage fish.

**Workshops funded by the Puget Sound Action Team-PIE Grant*

FORAGE FISH FACTS

Forage Fish Species of Concern

Forage fish are important prey for over 100 species of consumers including 40 species of birds, 12 species of marine mammals, and 45 species of fishes including at risk salmon and bottomfish populations.



Pacific herring

Surf smelt

Sand lance

Forage fish are a valuable indicator of the health and productivity of our marine system.

Forage Fish Spawning Habitat

Surf smelt and sand lance spawn on beaches in the intertidal zone, while herring lay their eggs on eelgrass and other marine algae.



SJC Forage Fish Spawning Sites



EELGRASS FACTS

Eelgrass: An Underwater Ark

Compared to nearby barren, shifting sands, the eelgrass meadow is full of life. As in an old-growth forest, there are habitats in every niche. The leaves, stems, roots and rhizomes provide multiple habitats and support a great variety of animals living in, above, under, and on the eelgrass. Eelgrass forms a hiding place for herring eggs. Herring is a major food source for salmon, seabirds, seals, and other marine mammals. Eelgrass also shelters juvenile salmon and important salmon snacks such as copepods.

The development of the eelgrass community starts with a coating of diatoms on the eelgrass blades to which bacteria and other algae are then able to attach. This seemingly insignificant brown felt is of immense importance to the entire eelgrass ecosystem. Without this initial layer which has the ability to colonize and complete a life cycle in a short time, and which has an extremely high growth rate, many of the nursery and nutritional functions of the eelgrass meadow would never develop.



Crab Camp

The Dungeness crab often molts and moves into eelgrass. Other crabs found in eelgrass include the red, graceful, spider, and helmet crabs.



Nudibranch Niche

The opalescent nudibranch swims among eelgrass blades feeding on invertebrates and their eggs. It sports iridescent plumes that are, in fact, gills.



Grub for Gunnels

Gunnels are often confused with eels. Their top fin is long and spiny. Gunnels swim in shallow water among eelgrass blades.



A Port for Pipefish

The bay pipefish grows to about 13 inches and is related to the seahorse. Males incubate young in a brood patch and eat in eelgrass meadows.

Each blade of eelgrass is a food factory.



Preserve, protect, and enjoy the beauty of
the San Juan Islands. Join the FRIENDS.



FRIENDS of the San Juans

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25th ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION Picnics:

- July 11: Lopez Vineyard
- July 14: Lavender Farm, San Juan Is.
- July 21: Plum Tree Farm, Orcas Is.
- July 25: Ellis Biological Preserve, Shaw Is.