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482 Sprague Valley Drive  
Maple Falls, WA 98266*

January 7, 2008

David Stalheim, Director & Martin Blackman, Land Use Supervisor—SEPA  
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department  
Northwest Annex  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226-6907

RE: SEP 07-181; 2007 Draft Foothills Subarea Plan

Dear Mr. Stalheim and Mr. Blackman,

My husband and I want to thank you very much for your action to further examine the environmental impacts of proposals contained in the recently introduced Foothills Subarea Plan. As citizens of the Foothills Subarea, we intimately understand the magnitude of proposals under consideration that could have a potentially damaging impact on quality of life in the Foothills.

We will try to be concise in summarizing our concerns. These are our main points, which we hope you will include in your upcoming environmental impact study:

- ❖ **PRIVATE ROADS:** No provision has been made for impacts of the Subarea on the privately owned roads of Peaceful Valley Country Club.
- ❖ **SPRAGUE LAKE IMPACTS:** One of the priority projects proposed by the Subarea Plan is to build a foot bridge over Sprague Lake. We do not think this is either feasible nor an ecologically sound project. The volume of the lake is determined by the water table in the aquifer. Every five years the lake nearly dries up due to the low water table. Also, there are numerous bird and wildlife species that would potentially be impacted by human interaction or the proposed infrastructure. As we live on the lake, we know first hand that there is a breeding pair of blue herons, several species of ducks and other waterfowl. Last winter, there were seven trumpeter swans that wintered over on the lake. Bald eagles also frequent the area. Other wildlife species we have observed include otter families. Sprague Lake has a minimum of a 15-foot swamp buffer around the entire lake per information we have received in years past from your department. It is our understanding that this area surrounding the lake is not to be developed but kept in its current natural state for the wise protection of wildlife.
- ❖ **WATER QUALITY:** The aquifer that serves this area is found to be less than 20 feet from the surface, according to geological studies. Any substantial development would have an impact on the ground water and possibly the quality of the drinking water. This would also have a residual impact on privately owned wells downstream of the presently proposed Subarea expansion. As an elected Water Commissioner for District 13, I personally believe that an environmental impact study should be pursued as aggressively and thoroughly as the last study to determine water impacts.
- ❖ **IMPACTS OF GLOBAL WARMING:** The environmental impact study must address the recommendations of the Governor's Climate Impacts Group to be released in February 2008 to Governor Gregoire. In particular, projections for increased flooding and mudslides make it essential that residences NOT be built near alluvial fans. The draft document from the Governor's Climate Impacts Group states (Policy LUI-A, p. 33): "Discourage residential development on steep slopes and in forestry and agricultural areas." The location of a Subarea adjacent to the foot of Sumas Mountain is inviting the potential loss of property and/or life.

Sincerely,

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Tom Watkins

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Susan Sloan-Watkins